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WHERE THE APPLE REDDENS

By Edna Kenton

I

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I.

—*Browning.*

WHEN Regis married Victoria Ingraham, quietly and with no fanfare of trumpets, the very few of his friends who knew him and her and the other woman as well shrugged their fine or their insignificant shoulders as the case might be, and foretold the outcome by their loyal silence. But to Regis they wrote letters, jolly or silken, and to Victoria Regis they sent gifts, and to Mrs. Cort-Regis they paid the doubtful homage of holding their tongues until such time as she should lead along the somewhat dubious way.

This way Mrs. Cort-Regis trod without delay, and whether it was a path of roses or jesters' bells or plowshares no man might tell. The day after the cards reached town happened to be her day at home, and she waited only till her shifting lot of visitors had departed to turn to the three men who, alone of all her intimates, had come on this day to see her.

"Let us sit and talk comfortably over it, like three friends!" she quoted from a late dramatic fad, as she turned from speeding the last parting guest. She motioned the three men to chairs grouped round the fireplace, and they all smiled as they accepted her invitation and their cue.

She herself took the chair at the extreme end of the group, where she faced them all, regally. Her very chair had something of royal bearing in its tower-

ing back, which curved forward, high above her head like some ancient empress's prow. She wore a black dress which showed her beautiful throat, and her rounded arms, bare from the elbow down. She rested her hands now on the carved arms of her chair, and turned to the man nearest her, who happened to be Regis's publisher, and a very good friend of them both.

"You know her," she said serenely. "I remember you spoke of her once to me—quite innocently." She smiled at him. "What sort of a woman is she?"

Malcolm Carruthers placed the tips of his fingers together, and surveyed his hostess. "As absolutely, adorably feminine as—you yourself," he said, with a courtly little bow.

March and Dysart stirred slightly, relieved; Carruthers had done it faultlessly. If he had hesitated ever so little—if he had, mind you—the pause was not long enough to stop the even pace of Time. Each of his fellows thanked the Allah in whom he put his trust that Carruthers had been the man appointed to answer that question. And wonder of wonders, his answer was as truthful as it should have been satisfying.

But Beatrice Cort-Regis caught, as Carruthers should have known she would, the sophistry of his parry.

"My dear friend!" she murmured reproachfully. "A man as full of wisdom as you, and wisdom that is worldly as well as gleaned from books, to imagine that is a definite answer! She may be a shrew, and even then be—as you might choose to mean it—as adorably feminine as I!" Or a fool, Malcolm, a fool!"

"Oh she's not a fool!" spoke up

Dysart hastily, the youngest and therefore the best meaning man of the group. His intonation was faultlessly faulty. Carruthers shot him a malevolent glance, which ocular telegram Mrs. Cort-Regis caught off the wire, read with apparent amusement, and chose, naturally, not to pass on to the person to whom it was directed. She smiled at them both, Carruthers and Dysart, two distinct types of smiles. Then she turned humorous eyes on the third lingerer at her fireside. But March was missing the humor of things entirely, and his eyes swerved apprehensively toward Carruthers. And to Carruthers, at last, as at first, Mrs. Cort-Regis turned.

"Come, come, my friend," she said softly. "We are not a lot of tabby cats, you know, basking in the fire-light, and taking our feast of gossip. We are friends of each other, and of—his."

Carruthers turned instantly to her. "That is altogether true," he said apologetically. "If I deserve rebuke—and I do, of course—the reason lies in my realization of the fact that Regis has complicated his life beyond his right to others. She is a simple, unsophisticated, unlettered girl. I don't mean that she lacks education—as our young friend so patly observed a bit back, she's no fool. She is a cultured woman—Regis could not have married her otherwise. But it is culture of sorts and instincts, not of methods. Her one gift is music, and she may not be a genius there in the highest sense, but she is almost the only woman I have ever heard who plays Chopin one-half as well as the average man. Have you ever thought of that—the dearth of Chopin players among women, and have you or has anyone been able to give any reason why they should not be able to interpret him marvelously better?"

"Your Chopin patois is interesting," observed his friend. "But it is at best merely a side issue before this house. 'Simple, unsophisticated, unlettered!' Yes, I see what you mean, about Duane's having complicated his life."

She leaned back, serene, untroubled, watching the curling flames. At last she swept the small circle with her eye.

"Well," she said brightly, "you must all of you help her—him, when you can—but her, always."

March, an artist first, and general dilettante afterward, spoke up quickly: "Regis is not a boy, you know. He knows life and men and women."

Beatrice Cort-Regis smiled pitifully. "Duane not a boy!" she breathed. "Oh, how little you men know your own little kind! Duane is the most boyish of boys, the youngest of boys, the youngest of young things! He is piteously young, and that is why we rasped so, each on the other, my world-oldness against his everlasting youth. I was born a woman, and he was born a baby, and we have neither of us advanced nor retreated, and we never shall—can!"

She paused a moment, and her smooth brow knit slightly.

"Unsophisticated!" she mused. "Yes, that will charm him for a while; 'simple'—that, too, will charm. But 'unlettered,' unread"—she shook her head. Then she looked up at Carruthers, and for a scant second they looked directly into each other's eyes, a curious gaze to pass between a man and woman at such a fireside as was Beatrice Cort-Regis's. It went past convention, past sex, seeking in dumbness, and as it appeared, vainly. Carruthers would have given much to know just what the woman longed to hear him say about this thing. Knowing, he would have said it, had the heavens caught him up or Tophet yawned at his feet. It was Dysart's cheerful voice which broke that gaze.

"It is their music which is undoubtedly the bond," he said amiably, almost consolingly. Upon the youth Carruthers turned a cold eye. How was it that he had ever thought this youth amusing, had introduced him to Beatrice Cort-Regis, had asked her to take charge of a cub who might, with some unappreciated care, be made into a promising poet some day! He mentally booted himself into actual

physical pain at having so misread a human fellow, and sat in silence.

"Yes," mused Mrs. Cort-Regis equably at last, to everyone's infinite relief, "it must be that which drew them together. If she could play Chopin—it explains it all. I—I can play, Malcolm, you know. But it is Hungarian dances, Spanish tarantellas, the glorious, original can-can—all those dreadful things which shriek out their merry-making with their breaking souls—but which cover them up—which cover them up! Chopin is shameless in his exposures."

She rose suddenly, smiling down at the three men. Then she moved toward her piano, whose polished triangle lost itself in a screened alcove. She sat down suddenly, and struck some crashing chords, and began to chant with marvelous trueness some Hungarian words:

"Volt nekem egy darú szörű paripám——"

She sang through two verses of the weird song of Korbay's setting, "Mohacs Field." She ended with a crying crash of chords, not on the composer's score, and came back to them as suddenly as she had left them.

"That sort of thing!" she said coolly. "You don't get any sort of satisfaction out of that soul's suffering, do you? 'More was lost at Mohacs Field!' It was that attitude in me that Duane would never stand—or understand! And I—I could never endure it, to see him sit down to wail over some broken butterfly-wing when perhaps close by him, some human soul was being broken on some torturing wheel. And when I would wail over neither—nor play Chopin—and even laughed at him when he mourned over me—" She threw out her hands with a gesture which told the rest of the story which they all knew.

No one spoke for a moment. Carruthers shook himself at last, and looked at her half-angrily. "I desire you never to sing that miserable thing again!" he said briefly. "It is unholy, sacrilegious, horrible! It belies us all. And those of us whom it does not belie, it belittles."

"Dear Malcolm, no! It is merely a brief epitome of a sane man's detached view of the cosmic process. 'More was lost at Mohacs Field'—more than anything any one of us shall ever endure. It seems to me that should make men happy—the belittling of their woes. But no—only a few there are whom it does not make very, very sad." She laughed, softly. Then her face sobered.

"I am so sorry for her," she said abruptly. "She would better be able to weigh all things with some Mohacs disaster, to spare herself. I never thought before what it means to a woman—if she be a thinking woman—to marry a man while there is another woman alive who knows him through and through and through. If I ever risked it again, I should not marry a divorced man, with his divorced wife alive. I should not want to know that a woman lived who could pity me, and she always could!"

She stopped suddenly; Carruthers's hand was laid swiftly for an instant on hers. No one observed it, and she only felt it, for, when she looked down, it was already withdrawn. Her lips smiled slightly as she looked toward him.

"I am good," she murmured. "I mean it. I am sorry for her. She will find hard things in her path, poor child!"

For another naked moment she looked at herself in his eyes; slowly her hand lifted itself from the chair arm, and pointed straight toward herself.

"I!" she breathed. She looked about the tiny circle, and met their varying gazes unflinchingly, reading some bit of the truth in each telltale face. Then she sat straight in her chair, and looked directly at Carruthers. "You will tell her all about it," she said simply. "What all of you know, that there was no hope from the first, for us—for anything beyond the first few months of unreasoning beatitude. With the first breath of analysis the bubble burst. Even in those first few months we grated so on each other that Duane all but had fits, and I St.

Vitus dances! It was marriage that was the trouble with us. Apart we are good friends, the best of friends. We have always been good friends, from the very moment that the decree was granted, and we shall always be that—even this girl—this woman—this child—his wife—" The word was out at last, defiantly, almost raggedly. Her eyes, on Carruthers, never wavered, but they showed him every phase of her struggling realization of changed conditions, new elements.

He leaned over and caught her hand gently. "You, old!" he said whimsically. "You—world old! When you have no idea of what a primitive moral struggle is like! This girl is primitive, I tell you. What it cost her to marry Regis, with what she holds your claim on him still to be, no mortal will ever know, certainly not you; least of all, Regis. Because worldlings like you and I can look on life and not live it is no sign that others do not writhe with pain and go mad with joy as men used to when the world was young—before too many cursed Mohacs Fields were lost and won. I think it means that we must give up Regis entirely—that is," he added, "if we are, as you say, to help any."

Mrs. Cort-Regis sat very still for a few moments. When she looked up she spoke, curiously enough, to Dysart.

"She will hate me, I dare say."

"She couldn't!" said the youngest man of the three. This time his intonation was perfect, from Mrs. Cort-Regis's standpoint, and she smiled joyously at him.

"I hope not, indeed," she said. "Malcolm here has just shown me how pitifully young I am, and you add your indirect evidence to his. Yes, I love to be liked. That is why it has been so pleasant—to have Duane here from time to time—with all of us—to feel that after all our storms, he can really like me."

Soon after that March and Dysart departed, but Carruthers, although he had been the first comer, determinedly remained. He was standing before

the fireplace when Mrs. Cort-Regis came back from speeding her two departing guests. He glanced up at her, as she moved about, restoring order to the disarranged room.

"He said nothing of it to you?" he asked at length, his question all but bordering on the impudent, as he very well knew.

Beatrice Cort-Regis shook her head. "We promised each other that," she said; "that if either of us ever married again, we would just be married, and let the cards tell it to the other; and that our friendship—the feeling of it," she corrected hastily, "would go on the same as ever. I think we neither of us imagined the other would ever marry one who couldn't see things exactly as we look at them—somehow I never dreamed of Duane's marrying a woman of any other type than my own." She sighed a little.

Carruthers leaned forward imperiously. "How do you honestly feel about this? Tell me."

She looked back very frankly. "As if I were very sure not to like the girl—his wife." She held up her hand to ward him ever so slightly off as he bent nearer her. "That is all the feeling I have. I could never care for Duane in the old way, never. I dare say I've been proud of our being able to be real friends—he's so nice when it's nothing but friendship—when both of us are free."

He looked somberly on her, and turned away. To his soul her tone was not so satisfying as her words; it was just a half shade too defiant, too assertive. Without other remark he moved toward the door, and Mrs. Cort-Regis followed him.

"You'll remember, Malcolm," she said hesitatingly, "that I'm enough his friend—and so enough her friend—to do anything—I can—for them—for her."

"I shall remember," Carruthers answered somewhat stiffly. "But it will probably be unnecessary for you—or any of us—to do anything other than leave them alone. Good evening."

He held out his hand, and Mrs. Cort-Regis gave hers perfunctorily; then the curtains fell behind her. He moved toward the door, and paused as it opened. A wild crash of chords, fierce and angry, came from behind those curtains; and then he heard her voice lifted in magnificent recitative:

"Had a horse, a finer no one ever saw,
But the sheriff sold him in the name of law.
E'en a stirrup cup the rascal would not yield—
But no matter—more was lost at Mohacs
Field."

He frowned as he listened; he hated that thing of Korbay's which seemed above all other hateful folk-melodies, her favorite. She was skipping the second stanza, the farm-house bit of deviltry, and was hardly more than speaking the third. Carruthers passed through the door, and then paused on the very threshold, held there, powerless to go.

"Had a sweetheart, mourned her loss long
years and years,
Thought her dead, and every day gave her
my tears.
Now I find her 'neath another's roof and
shield—
But no matter—more was lost at Mohacs
Field."

As he slipped carefully into the outer darkness, the sound of some other crashing, utterly profane music behind him eased the strain a bit. At least it precluded any fancy of her lying across the piano with her head bowed on her arms, or any such theatrically tawdry bit of business. In fact, Carruthers, as he stepped into his cab, was merely granting, with all the shame of an honorable man who has eavesdropped, that he had just listened to a wonderful interpretation, that the *ne plus ultra* in that song's rendition had been reached. Carruthers could hear the woman's playing, even after his cab had started down the Avenue—and he discovered then that the strain had not been permanently eased. So he turned resolutely to thought of the other woman—the girl, he should say, whom his friend had married, and more and more he wondered how that marriage would prove itself, for good or ill! Beatrice Cort-Regis was all

that was womanly and essentially feminine, but she bore, too, the red blood of men in her veins. Almost for her might Lafcadio Hearn's words be reversed, when he said: "Every mortal man has been many million times a woman." But Victoria Ingraham, with her finely cameoed face and her finely cameoed principles of life—she had always stood to Carruthers for the All Womanly ever since he had first met her, six years before, when she was just sixteen. It might have been the exquisite contrast which Jewel Moultrie had afforded him that night, with Victoria pinned up, as it were, a fluttering spirit, against the Oriental background of Jewel's complexities and involutions; but at all events, however it had happened, his conception of the girl had been instantaneous, and had been polished into perfect form with the passing of the years, although he saw her but seldom, and never with any shade of intimacy about their meetings.

In Carruthers's mind the thought of Victoria Regis had displaced the unrestful thought of Beatrice. Even the sound of that wild song no longer haunted him, and he gave himself up to placid reminiscences as he was driven slowly through the evening crush of carriages bound for the restaurants and cafés.

II

FROM her earliest childhood Victoria Ingraham's life had been austere. Left an orphan at five years of age, she passed to the care of a gaunt, old, old man, her father's father, who had to combat a double prejudice against her: the fact that she was a girl, instead of the longed-for heir to the Ingraham name, and, above all else, the fact that she was the child of the woman Arthur Ingraham had married. To old Dr. Ingraham, sitting in his gloomy study, the sound of her step or voice smote upon his ears as a stranger's would have done. He could never grant that his son's blood flowed in her veins, and if her mother had left behind her any people to whom the child with any

show of decency might have been surrendered, the old man would have given her up without a heart throb. But, since she was alone in the world, save only for the shelter of his home and name, he gave them to her freely, if coldly, and, as he saw it, did his duty.

Yet her whole childhood, up to the time she was fourteen, was one long purgatory. Hers was a nature made for love and sympathy, and she found neither. She was born for a free life, was blessed with a love for nature and its delights, and she was held fast to a cross of rules and rigid regulations. Every hour in her day was arranged for her, and from the outlined plan she might not deviate. Therefore her play hours, as well as her working ones, became distresses to her, instead of pleasures. Her reading was mapped out for her, with her days, and the dull studies and duller books she was set to plod through filled her with a slow horror for the printed page, a feeling which did not wear off for years, and would perhaps forever prevent her from being one to whom reading was pure delight. Only once did there come anything into her life to break the deadly monotony of seven weary, unchildish years, and that was in the Summer which marked her twelfth birthday, when Jewel Danvers made her brief descent upon the Puritan village, and nested for the time being in her granduncle's home.

Jewel Danvers had been Jewel Ingraham. She was a small, dark, laughing creature, ugly as a woman might well be, and yet unutterably attractive, with her crooked mouth which twisted itself oddly at all times, and which one might not read with ease until one knew the woman; with her dark, clear skin, which fair women condemned without a passing glance, and which artists, in all other ways sane, had been known to rave over; and with her ineffable grace of motion and gesture.

Mr. Danvers had not been forthcoming at any time during his young wife's visit, and somehow, Victoria never

knew how, she gained the knowledge that there was a divorce, and that her grandfather, who was also Mrs. Danvers's guardian and the executor of her estate, strongly disapproved of the modern trend toward the end of marriage, and looked, indeed, upon his grandniece as a woman hopelessly disgraced.

Mrs. Danvers had come for a month's stay, and two weeks of it passed safely over. But there quickly came a morning when, at breakfast, between her and her uncle there broke a frightful explosion of temper, young and old together, and Jewel Danvers departed in the utmost wrath on the noon train. Victoria, who had grown to worship this blithe and bonny cousin, understood enough even then to know that the delightful Jewel did not purpose to remain faithful to the memory of her living husband, and that this visit, ostensibly a dutiful revisiting of family shrines and lares, had been the veil for her strong intention to obtain full control of certain parts of her property, in order that she might manage her comings and goings with less revealing of them to an unsympathizing granduncle. When the second marriage took place, which it did within another month, old Dr. Ingraham threw up his management of her estate, and took occasion, solemnly, to warn his grandchild against any further dealings with a woman so given over to modern indecencies. To guard against lurking memories of such regrettable contamination as that to which she had been just exposed, notwithstanding the fact that it was heated Midsummer, her studies were immediately resumed. And after that, for the rest of the old man's life, two slow years, there was no mention of Jewel Danvers in his house.

Victoria Ingraham's one comfort, and final savior, was her astonishing love for music, inherited from no one in particular, so far as known records cover the case, but a mighty part of her, nevertheless. Because all young ladies of his far-off generation had played the pianoforte, old Dr. Ingra-

ham had his grandchild taught by the best teacher the small village afforded; and her talent grew to such amazing proportions that, upon her grandfather's death in her fifteenth year, her guardian, the old man's lawyer, sent her up to the city to school, with instructions that her bent for music was to be cultivated assiduously. Her natural technique was prodigious, and she had already gone by leaps instead of painstaking steps over the mighty difficulties which assail all beginners.

Then followed two years of dreary school, broken only by the long vacations in the old home, still kept open by an aged sister of Dr. Ingraham's. The chosen school was not a particularly good one—it would have been a chance in a thousand if it had been, considering the many mediocre schools which thrive, and considering Victoria Ingraham's temperament, which would have fitted ill into most of the best ones. Therefore everything but the beloved music became a stupid study. She was just sixteen when she entered upon her third year at the hated school, with no friend made there in all the two years, a fault not hers, and perhaps not to be laid at the doors of those who surrounded her. It was a plain case of mismatching, and she was powerless to help herself, and there seemed no one fitted to help her.

There came a rainy day in that third year, when she with two others of the school-girls were downtown shopping, under the careful watch of a plain, school-hardened chaperon. In one of these shops she broke suddenly from the small band of prisoners, and went swiftly across the aisle to the lace-counter, where a small, superbly groomed woman sat, leisurely examining some laces.

"Cousin Jewell!" she said breathlessly; and then paused, hot and flushing, remembering her grandfather's name for this cousin, once so beloved by her. "A light woman," he had called her, and the phrase had stuck in her memory even while it held no meaning for the child she was at the

time. She began to be sorry she had spoken, to hope that this woman whose present name she did not know had forgotten her entirely, so that she might plead mistaken recognition, and so pass once for all out of the life of her who had been Jewel Danvers—in such strong colors had old Dr. Ingraham painted his grandniece and her sins.

But the small, faultlessly tailored woman turned and stared, and then sprang to her feet, dragging down with her swift springing pieces of Irish crochet and d'Alençon, a mishap which she characteristically disregarded.

"Vic, you child!" she cried. "You shy, shrinking child!" Her voice was pitiful. "What has life with that old man done for you, to make you so old and cold! And how are you here? And where are you staying? And what does this person mean?" For the maiden lady in charge of Mrs. Brookshire's pupils touched Victoria firmly on the arm.

Explanations followed, and Victoria was left in peace for a quarter of an hour, while her fellow-prisoners completed their purchases across the aisle. She asked shyly enough for Jewel's new name and address, and Jewel laughed at the flush and unconquerable coldness in the girl's voice, and gave her both, and the meeting ended with Victoria's promise to go to her cousin's the following Saturday, for over Sunday.

The chance meeting proved a revolution which was to overturn all the girl's preconceived notions of life and morals. All through the intervening week; even while she was dressing the following Saturday afternoon; while she waited for her cousin's brougham, while she read the scribbled note which begged a thousand pardons in Jewel's fascinating handwriting for Jewel's not coming in person for her; while she nestled against the soft cushions during the swift drive; through it all she felt wicked and sinful. For she was going, deliberately, of her own willing, to the house of that painted Jezebel whom Julia Ingraham-Danvers-Moultrie had always stood for to that dead old Puritan whose blood was in them both. But

she was so hideously lonely, and so desperate because of the freshly mounting blood within her and its demanding cry for life of some sort, that she was all but ready to brave the terrors of her grandfather's hell to gain it.

The brougham stopped before a small, delightfully cozy-looking home, and Victoria felt her throat contract with a delicious sensation, half-terror, half-delight, as the doors swung open for her, and she entered, to follow the white-capped maid, without announcement, to her cousin's tiny sitting-room upstairs. The note had told of Jewel's by no means serious illness, and Victoria never forgot her first sight of her cousin as she saw her that day, lying in a rich blue kimono, with her ugly little face, dark and irregular and utterly charming, and her great black eyes with their lashes, straight, and all but too long.

"You darling!" Mrs. Moultrie cried. "Come to me. Marie, take her things off and carry them to her room. You don't want to run away from me now to go there. How old are you? Sixteen! You were only twelve, then, when poor, dear Uncle James cast me forth!"

Her laugh rang out, and Victoria smiled because she could not help it. Her sense of humor had been almost submerged in her Puritan training, but it had been the saving salt, and it still abided with her. But she shuddered a bit nevertheless. She wondered vaguely how Jewel could laugh, living under Walter Moultrie's roof, with Murray Danvers living elsewhere—she found she did not know whether Danvers had married again or not, and she felt intensely curious over it. Yet she could never ask Jewel such a question!

The two hours before dinner passed delightfully. Jewel was utterly fascinating, now as ever; and Victoria felt herself falling more and more under the spell of her cousin's brilliancy. She was not a girl given to rash confidences, and she said but little of herself now, to Mrs. Moultrie; but that competent little lady filled in the ragged

outlines of Victoria's halting speech, and rebelled inwardly at such a somber life, while she smiled and dimpled outwardly because her guest too patently desired no open sympathy.

Yet the two hours served to establish definitely sympathetic relations between them, and by the time Moultrie entered, Victoria had forgotten his unwelcome existence. She remembered it with a rush at the sight of him, but as she looked on him, handsome, big, charming—perfectly charming, Victoria said to herself defiantly—she melted involuntarily in her severe, sixteen-year-old judgment of him and Jewel. Before she realized it, he had kissed his newly introduced cousin lightly, and then had gone over to his wife; and without any demonstration to that effect between the two, Victoria realized with startling suddenness that she was for the first time in her life in the presence of honest happiness, and while the realization stilled her shudders, it cast her into a sea of questionings. Then dinner was announced, and Victoria, who had been dreading a tête-à-tête dinner with Moultrie, saw him pick Jewel up in his arms quite as if she were an ailing child, looking back over his shoulder to ask the girl to follow with a pillow and Jewel's drops.

The dinner had been delightful, with Moultrie still charming and more charming, and Jewel all that Victoria had remembered of her and much more. Then Moultrie picked his wife up again and carried her into a charming little room which was not drawing-room nor den nor library, and made her all that was comfortable and pampered. Then a few guests dropped in, all of them men, for Jewel Moultrie, delightful as she had made herself to her lonely little cousin, was not a woman's woman; three of them in all, March, an artist, Dufresne, a musician, and one Malcolm Carruthers, publisher.

The outline of all which stands above floated through Carruthers's brain while his cab threaded the evening maze of the narrow Avenue. As

they passed Thirty-third street, he leaned forward, and issued an order which would take him far downtown, and then he leaned back, his mind still busied with memories of that first evening when he had first met this nun-faced girl, whose whole history Jewel Moultrie had joyously given him the next week.

He could see easily now how the entire evening had shocked the girl, intellectually at least, if not morally. He could imagine her positive hurt at Jewel's receiving in a state of such undress, at Moultrie's countenancing it; at the odd freedom which prevailed. He remembered his own uncouth offering to Jewel of her favorite cigarettes, having forgotten the quiet girl, sitting in the shadow of Moultrie's revolving book-case, and he stared in quite untutored fashion at Mrs. Moultrie's commanding gesture of refusal and dismissal. He had acquitted himself in the surprise of the moment badly; none lived who would own it more frankly than he. In bitter payment therefore for his crassness, he retreated to the shadow, too, to entertain, in sackcloth and ashes, a school-girl.

At first he tried to engage her in talk, but he soon divined that, stupid or not, the girl was just now shy and foreign to them all, and realized it more keenly than he did. So he gave up that gambit, and began to talk to her instead. It had happened that on that first evening he chanced to talk to her of Duane Regis, some poems of whose he had just published, and he would never forget her blank gaze when he compared some of them to Kipling. The Kipling craze was then at its maddest height, and before that night Carruthers would have sworn that new-born babes, from pure force of pre-natal influences, babbled of Kipling in their innocent sleep. But he talked at garrulous length of the promise of the poems, and of the young man's exquisite prose. He remembered his surprise when, a little later, the girl had quoted in marvelous aptness to some strictures of his on pretentious claims:

"Verulam I was,
What boots it what I was?
Sith now I am but weed
And wasted grass!"

"You don't know Swinburne nor Henley nor Kipling, but you do know Spenser," he said with huge enjoyment; and it was at that speech of his that she had looked up at last into his eyes.

"I don't know about any of this," she said simply, with an infinitely pathetic gesture, and a brooding glance at Jewel Moultrie. "I haven't read anything which has been printed since my grandfather's young manhood—anything to speak of—and I don't know anything about any of these people."

Carruthers had been keen enough to know that she was not referring to mere personal details, mere ignorance of these particular personalities; but that it was rather a confession of ignorance of these types she looked on, ignorance of people, of life. He searched quickly for comfort of some sort which he might bestow, and a chance glance at her hands reminded him of what he had divined before, a divination which her forehead and eyes and lips confirmed.

"You know music," he said quickly. "You play; play some for me. No, I assure you; no one told me—only you yourself. Come."

He hardly knew how he led her from the rest to the music-room adjoining. She followed him with shrinking, and as she seated herself at the piano, she looked up at him.

"Please go away," she said. "Indeed, I shall play you something, but if you will go away, I shall be so glad."

"I wonder what it will be," he said smilingly, as he left her, and he went away, to meet Jewel Moultrie's vivid eyes with a nod. He said nothing, but he picked out Moultrie's most promising cigar, and drew his chair half into the hall.

Along with his other divinations, he had divined that it would be Chopin. There it came, the E-minor Prelude, with its wailing melody, singing, singing. Despair was there, but it was

great, proud, Greek, of the ancient world. Carruthers smiled as he saw the sudden lifting of Dufresne's shaggy head, and the gleam of his small eyes, set deep in their cups. March, too, had scented something akin to genius in the touch of those slim fingers.

"Who is it?" Dufresne asked simply. Then his eyes wandered about the room. "Not that convent child!" he breathed.

Carruthers had merely nodded, and waited. The last notes died, and the D-minor Prelude came, a feverish, veritable *Appassionata*. Dufresne had sighed gently as its strains swept through the rooms, but at this thing, too, his head had suddenly reared itself in surprise. For the girl's tone-production was amazing, and her interpretation no less so, since into the Prelude's doleful fatalism she was hurling a very defiance of it, ennobling and full of strength.

And then had come the Nocturne in G-major, with its shifting, harmonic hues. Long before it was ended Dufresne was in the music-room, beside her.

"Who has taught you?" he asked abruptly. "A village teacher and von Kempf! Truly, if they are all, you are great indeed. You were born with technique—this training of yours is a shame, an outrage. How old are you?—sixteen! Mrs. Moultrie, come; let us talk together of your cousin and her future."

That had marked the beginning of her real musical training. It had been thorough. Mrs. Moultrie had written commanding letters to Victoria's guardians, and finally went down to see them, to return in triumph. Then had come the battle with Victoria, who refused flatly to enter her cousin's home and live there. She was better alone, she said; she had few friends, and Jewel had many; she did not fit into her cousin's circle; she must unlearn much—she frankly confessed it; but she must learn and unlearn by herself; she must be allowed to go to herself.

Carruthers had followed interest-

edly the immediately ensuing story, had been Mrs. Moultrie's confidant in her frantic searchings after the proper boarding-place, and had witnessed her vexation when Victoria, in a prim little note, had informed the lady that she herself had found it, far downtown, in an old, old house.

Then had come for him five years of forgetfulness of the girl. Very rarely he met her at her cousin's; not often enough to support sustained interest in her. From time to time he heard Dufresne speak of her, after Dufresne's method, in no definite terms. He knew in a general way that she was making marvelous progress, and that Dufresne was guarding her jealousy, after the manner of devoted masters. But of particulars he knew nothing.

It was just one year ago this month since he had stumbled on her, as she walked on Tenth street, and he had been flattered and touched by the odd gladness which had leaped to her eyes at the sight of him. She was then twenty-one, and the leaping youth in her eyes, taken with the austere lines of her lips, made him know, beyond need for words, how intensely lonely a life was hers. The frank gladness of her voice fell reproachfully on his ears, and he felt once again that keen interest in her which had been born the first night he saw her. He knew that she looked on him as very old; that his gray head did not tell to her its tale of premature grayness; that she had never read the youth which lay within his eyes. The chance meeting ended in his walking with her to her boarding-place, and in a promise that he would come to her the following Sunday afternoon to hear her play.

After all, he was the one directly responsible for this marriage of hers. He had set out, eagerly enough, the next Sunday, and at the club, where he stopped for half an hour, he found Duane Regis. They had launched into confidential talk, and then Carruthers, on a reasonless impulse, had asked Regis to call with him. Regis had indifferently refused, had scoffed like a Philistine at the idea of another

undiscovered genius in Tenth or Ninth or Eighth street, wherever it might be that this alleged cousin of Jewel Moultrie's lived, and Carruthers, with insane persistence, had carried his point to prove another.

So they had gone together to Victoria Ingraham's. They found her in an alcoved studio of the usual type, physically, but minus the usual sartorial trappings. Here were no dust-laden draperies, no pseudo-tapestry effects. The place was like herself, virginal, austere. Her beautiful piano stood in the centre of the room. There was a bust of Chopin on a shelf, and perhaps three pictures—no more—on the walls.

Carruthers had noted how, with his introduction of Regis, that same glad leap of youth came to her eyes, and recognition.

"Of course you know Regis," he had said, upon the heels of the formal introduction, and the girl had responded instantly.

"No, I don't know him at all. But I do remember very distinctly your telling me of him that first night at my cousin's—you remember?"

"Then, if you remember that, you must have read his printed matter," Carruthers hazarded. "Else you wouldn't be brave enough to recall all this." But Victoria shook her head.

"I've never read much," she confessed, with a glance at Regis which asked pardon for the heresy. "This is all I do." She turned toward the piano.

"I promised you," she added to Carruthers, "that I would show you what you did for me, in making me play for you five years ago. What is it that you want to hear?"

Carruthers bent toward her with laughing eyes. "My dear child," he said, "if you have a memory, I, too, remember. I want the E-minor Prelude and then the D-minor Prelude, and then the Nocturne in G-major. And after that—what you will."

"Great heaven!" he thought to himself, after she gave him one flashing glance, and turned instantly to her

piano. "Did that girl never in her life before meet with a soul who 'remembered'!"

He had leaned back reposefully, after that, to watch Regis as he listened, for almost an hour, to the girl. Once Miss Ingraham stopped, definitely, it seemed, and the young man spoke, quickly, in a hushed voice:

"Please—not until you have played through the twilight hour."

Carruthers caught the glance she shot at the speaker over her shoulder—the young man who—Carruthers should have remembered it—worshipped Chopin as a half-god, and loved him as a brother. It was a glance of perfect kinship of spirit. Tonight Carruthers knew that even so early the end had begun—that there had never been a beginning.

He remembered distinctly how Regis looked that night, after he had moved his chair more to the right, to sit where he could see the girl's face; how the young man's head lay like some finely chiseled marble against his chair, so stirless was he. The picture rose vividly before him, Regis's slender figure in that deep, high chair, his finely modeled face directly across from the girl at the piano, who, with the exception of one break, the G-major Nocturne, was playing the preludes through. The young man's face was pale, but his eyes were black and glowing with the highest feeling, and both he and she were lost to all the world. Over them all crept the slow, dim dusk. And it was then, just when the shadows were at their filmiest, before they had lost their grayness in the violet tones of night, that she sat with her hands folded for a brief moment, and then, lifting them, she began to play; three G's in the treble and in octaves; clear, and then in doubled rhythm; a rippling prelude, and then a melody nocturnic, enchanting—the Ballade in F-minor, that passionate lyric dedicated by its creator to the dusk of night or early dawn, to the gray hours of the world! Until she began to play it, Carruthers had not thought of the F-minor Ballade. But he felt, as its first notes fell on the

air, that this girl and Regis had been waiting for the gathering dusk together.

During this last year Carruthers had kept carefully out of it, deliberately aloof. That the two, Regis and the girl, saw much of each other he knew. That the entire question presented almost immediately fearful problems to Victoria Ingraham he knew also, through his general informant, Jewel Moultrie, who advised so far as she was allowed, and then oftentimes overstepped the bounds laid down by her pale, battling cousin, and advised in things ultimate. That it meant his life to Regis, Carruthers realized, and yet, with the matter settled for both of them, Carruthers was in grave doubt over the settlement and its outcome. Divorce was hideous, he granted, though marriage, as it was ordinarily lived, could be more so. If Victoria could but take practical views of practical things; but she could not, she could not! The three of them, Beatrice, Regis and Victoria, stood on three distinct planes in their attitudes toward this new state of their common affairs. Beatrice could receive both Regis and Victoria into her home that evening, with perfect grace and honest enjoyment. Regis could go, if occasion demanded, and acquit himself while there with composure, but he would not probably seek the experience. And Victoria would not, would not—could not.

"And there you have it!" muttered Carruthers, as his carriage drew up before March's home. "The two extremes and the compromise. One woman an ardent idealist, the other a self-detached materialist, and the man just exactly half and half. Hello, March, just starting? I decided, after all, that Freynal's sale was worth while, and determined to drive down on the chance of picking you up. No, no dinner yet. We'll stop off on our way."

III

DESPITE the sincere doubts of their good friends, Duane Regis and his wife

Victoria sent out no call for help in the adjusting of their new menage. When Regis brought his wife back from their leisurely honeymooning, he took her, not to his former home, but to his downtown rooms in which there was no reminder to Victoria Regis of the woman who had been before her. Regis had told her one day, shortly after their marriage, of his keen desire to retain for them both his bachelor apartment, the one he had leased back again, and lived in for the three years since his divorce from his first wife. He had been surprised at the sudden rush of misty tears to Victoria's eyes, for she was not the whimpering type of woman at all, and something delicately attuned to her mood prompted him to go on.

"I'd left them furnished with all my old traps—for two years. Then—I went back to them—for three years, to just the same comfortable old things. I never wanted, before, to see a woman moving about there, belonging to those rooms. But I hunger to see you there, my dearest, if you will come."

Would she not go! She would do anything—everything—she had vowed that to herself that last dreadful night of final battle and decision; but how all but painful was her joy to know that this thing was not to be required of her, to step into the home which had been that other woman's, with its memories, with its stories which the jealous walls would guard forever! "Thou art the soul of thy house, and he who after thee inhabits it will know thee!" A saying of some psychometrical maniac, that; but the saying stayed with her. She shrank painfully from having anything whatever to do with anything which had belonged in time past to the other woman. Everything relating to Regis's past life she tried relentlessly to thrust away from her. She was not a jealous woman, nor a foolish one; but she was mystical, and odd things pained her, and inconsequent incidents affected her.

Ever since she had yielded herself unreservedly to love and Duane Regis, ever since that last night of battle, when she took the terrifying leap

over the solid barrier of her puritanical training, she had been busied with casting all her puritanical moralities to the four great winds, and then had tried to accomplish the impossible deed of sitting with her back to them all at once, striving to forget that they had ever been a part of her, or that they were still alive and grim about her. As much as lies within the power of woman to compass the task, she had burned her bridges, but the smoke of her sacrifice lingered, and, because she was a woman memory too often spanned the gulf she had tried to create between her present and her past. She could not forget, try as she would, that Beatrice Cort had once, and not so long since, been Regis's wife, and remembering that, she could not deaden her inbred conviction that the woman, having been his wife once, was his wife still, since it was not death which had parted them. It was purest love which had swept her to Regis; an ignoble passion, born merely of the flesh, she was quite strong enough to have withstood, to have trampled under foot, to her present torture and final blessedness. There was no doubt in her mind, however, that Duane Regis was the complement of her very spirit, and that truth once established, there was no shadow of doubt that she belonged to him, by right of her great love and his. And so she had been brave enough to shatter every life-long prejudice, to burn her Puritan bridges, to marry him, divorced man that he was, with his former wife not only living, but a resident of the only town which Duane could make his home, his neighbor, practically—and hers!

Yet she found the new life, after their return to town, far easier than she had dared to hope it might be. Regis's friends, being people, in most part, of the ultra world, avoided instinctively annoying contretemps and blunders of all sorts. The first Winter went by, in fact, with Victoria Regis spared triumphantly any embarrassments whatever. What Regis's friends did not do, Beatrice Cort-Regis effected

with the utmost skill, and as the weeks fled by Victoria forgot at times not only that she herself had not always been there, but that any other had been there before her. This was due in great part to the pleasant breeding of Regis's world, which is accustoming itself by swift steps to the complexities of the modern problems of modern marriage laws. Natures such as Victoria's complicate the solution of special cases, as Beatrice Cort-Regis's easy acceptance of things as they are do not, but this is merely one of the intricate ramifications of the great problem with which the modern world is dealing, and somehow, in her special case the feelings of *une sensitive* were regarded to an unusual degree. All this smoothing of her path was due in a measure larger than she could dream to her part in the beautiful love-drama which was unfolding its primitively simple plot before the amazed and somewhat weary eyes of Regis's intimate circle. Just as his friends had realized that his marriage with Beatrice Cort was a foolish thing for them both, so they were forced to own, all of them slowly, and some of them shamefacedly in view of the wells of lurking sentiment which such confession entailed, that here was a romance all but medieval, being lived within sound of the roar of elevated trains, and under the shadow of wind-shaken skyscrapers.

Regis's rooms were far downtown, being the whole, in fact, of a small, two-story brick dwelling on one of the narrow cross streets. Without, it was nothing but red brick and leaded panes. Within, it was but little short of satisfying. There was a delightful living-room and hall combined, from whence the Colonial staircase sprang into airier regions. There was the music-room beyond, and beyond that, Regis's special library and workshop. There was no other room downstairs save a small pantry-like kitchen, and it therefore followed, since there was no dining-room, that his meals were served by his small Japanese servant at any spot in the house Regis's fancy dictated.

In this compact little dwelling, Victoria's coming made necessary no changes worth considering. Gerard continued his noiseless and supremely perfect management of the entire menage, and all things moved on as before. The only innovation, indeed, was the displacing of Regis's fascinating but undeniably tinkley pianoforte of a century ago for Victoria's own modern concert-grand piano.

They watched its coming together, following every detail of its egress from the van with the foolish delight of children. And when the men had left, after placing the instrument where they had decided it would better stand, they concluded that a shifting of ten inches to the left would result in a much more harmonious arrangement, which change, accomplished, made the entire room look as if, from the beginning of things, its present condition was ordained. And then Victoria unlocked the instrument, and swept the keys triumphantly. Almost unconsciously she struck the majestic chords of "Hail, Bright Abode," and broke off instantly, laughing, half-ashamed, for though a woman full of sentiment, she was shy as a savage in expressing it. All her life long she had lived with people who, having both ears and eyes, neither heard nor saw aught save the most obvious, and even now, after six months of this perfect life, she caught herself shrinking instinctively from some uttered thought, which she could never before have put into words; shrinking even after it had been proved to her, over and over again, that Regis understood with satisfying sympathy both her silence and her speech.

After that she sat down and played him many things, the bits of music which were most intimately associated with all their courtship and their early marriage. And whatever she played on this dying day, it was always Chopin: a tiny, questioning prelude, a brilliant valse strain, some aching melody; the rippling, rain-like prelude in the key of G, and a part of the B-flat minor's rushing torrent. And then the second figure of the Nocturne in G-major.

And, because she was so happy, the Fifth Prelude in D, a bit of iridescent joy. They lingered there until the twilight fell about them, and then, when its shadows were grayest, she played the Ballade in F-minor, with its slow, mournful valse movement; played it as she had never played it before, and perhaps would never play it again. And after it, as on that first day when she and Regis had met to know each other, she played no more.

He bent over her as she sat, hushed and quiet, and his eyes flamed into hers, as his arms pressed her close.

"You are the only human being who has ever brought a foreign stick into this place!" he whispered vehemently.

If Regis had ever apprehended her most secret labyrinths of feeling under her invariably direct expression, Victoria had never yet failed to catch his direct thought beneath his subtleties of utterance. She looked up at him now, with eyes which brimmed with happy tears, and for only answer she kissed him softly. She caught the pardon mutely asked of her for that first early mistake, and she gave him mute return for his asseverated insistence that she alone, of all living women, held his heart in the hollow of her hand.

IV

THE coming of Victoria's piano seemed to mark definitely the end of their honeymooning, which had been prolonged far into the Winter, and long after their return to town. It established the small household, without words, on a new basis. Before this time, everything had belonged to Regis, even Victoria herself. Nothing which had been hers in her girlhood had found a place here, because she cared to bring practically nothing with her. Even the pictures which she had cared for had been, of necessity, reproductions, and not always good ones, at that. Regis's surroundings were full to overflowing with the beauty which hers had always lacked, and she discovered herself beginning to loathe the merely

useful with that intensity of hatred which only an estheticized Puritan can feel toward the bare and utilitarian. So she had reveled in his home, his pictures—hardly in his books as yet, because she was not yet a reading woman. The memory of her grandfather's ancient library was too close to her. But in his voice, reading aloud to her, she delighted, and often she re-read for herself books and articles which he had read aloud. Yet, with the coming of her beloved instrument, a part of her old life rolled in upon the full tide of her new happiness, and for the first time since her marriage she felt linked to the old days, less detached from all that she had ever known.

Regis, too, began his work again. All things he had put by since their wedding in October. This new piece of work was a novel, a glowing bit of analytic psychology, the revivifying of a woman who moved an enigma through the history of her time. Love of her had seized him suddenly, and he set about the task of solving her, not historically but psychologically. All through the Winter and Spring he worked, with Victoria's presence a sort of grateful incense always. They settled into a quiet mode of life, with but few comings and goings. Often, during his work, he would call to her to play for him, and she, delighted, would leave whatever she might be doing, to gratify his whim.

Sitting at her piano, she could glance across it into his library, to his table, over which he bent, working oftentimes with a concentration the most curious of anything she had ever watched. She grew at last able to interpret his mood through the effect of her music upon him, and to play thereby, as he thought, instinctively, those bits of favorites which moved him most or quickened him. Almost always she played Chopin for him during these weeks. For what Malcolm Carruthers said of her was true. She played Chopin as few women ever interpret him.

She was playing the second figure

of the Nocturne in G-major one afternoon in early Spring, when, through half-closed eyes, she saw Regis rise quickly from his desk and come out to her. Even while her fingers were still slipping over the keys, in the changing colors of the swooningly sweet melody, he laid a card upon the music-rack and she bent forward to read it. Was it over this that he had been lavishing time and care when she had supposed him buried in what he had told her was practically the end of his labors? Even she did not know what they were, for Regis never talked over unfinished work, not even with his nearest and dearest.

It was a simple bit of pasteboard, blank half an hour before. Now it held, in old English lettering, the title of his book, that hour finished: "Mary, Queen." Below was the word, "Dedication." Below that, "To V. I. R."; the initials coiled into an intricate and alluring monogram, illumined and lovely.

"Victoria, Imperatrix, Regina!" he whispered. "You royal woman!"

"Is it done?" she asked, in a hushed voice. Whatever of honest awe before his powerful inspiration Regis had lacked in these months, she had supplied in full measure.

"Done and dedicated!" said Regis. "What! Are you surprised! When every line of it sings of your melodies, and every honest heart-throb in it means your presence here by me, or the thought of you and your love when you were absent, while I wrote it! When it is all nothing at all but you—you!"

She went in with him a few moments later to look at the pile of manuscript, practically finished. "I shall let it lie for a while," Regis said, as she bent above it. "Just to rest from it a little. Then I shall run it through, and polish it a bit where it seems to need it, and get it to Carruthers for his Fall list. What a royal book it is, darling, of a royal woman, to a royal woman! Even the initials of your name, maiden and married, are a delightful fancy. No, no—don't read it by yourself. Wait

till I get home tonight. I must go down to meet Carruthers and Dysart at the offices—I telephoned Carruthers yesterday that I should be able to talk with him today, and he has been a patient chap about it."

"Are you going to tell Mr. Carruthers about it?" she asked quickly, following him to the hall, and standing beside him while he selected his gloves and stick from a table.

"Yes," said Regis; he turned to look at her, and read her thought instantly in her face. "Wouldn't you mind—really?" he asked her. "You would rather? Victoria, what a darling you are! Then I shall bring him down to dinner—not Dysart? Very well, I don't care much for Dysart, myself, except that he's a young chap Carruthers had been taking an unlimited amount of interest in lately, based on unlimited faith—to me he seems not quite half-baked. You really don't mind Carruthers—I shouldn't have a jarring note in this night for a world of Carrutherses!"

"Why, he's done all things for you that a publisher can do," said Victoria proudly. "And I know he is eager to hear this—he has told me so. And when we think what he has done, not for you alone, but for us both—"

"The wonder of it!" said Regis whimsically. "Then we might have an early dinner tonight. The book isn't immensely long, but it will take several hours of steady reading."

She lifted her hands and drew his face down to hers, kissing him in a manner peculiarly hers when she was intensely moved; kissed him as she kissed but seldom, and her lips were quivering when she let him go. She watched him down the street, and then she went out to the tiny kitchen and gave vaguely general orders to Gerard for the evening meal.

From him she went back into the music-room, picking up the card from the piano where it lay. "To V. I. R.!" she whispered to herself. Then she went impulsively into the library and stood again beside the table where lay the wonderful manuscript, all but flawless even in its first draft. She

turned a few of its pages, not in faithless curiosity, but in pure pride in him and his achievement. It is to be doubted if she saw, intelligently, a word of the sentences on which her eyes rested.

At last she sat down there, holding fast to the card which Regis had given her, reveling in this hour of supreme joy. Above all things else, by the force of every instinct, women glory in creation, however hidden and remote. Regis had told her the book was born of her, that her presence had given it life, and the words seemed still to sound in her ears. The very air seemed to bear them up to murmur again about her. She kissed the card which held those magic letters; and after that first hesitating kiss, she smothered it with kisses.

She told herself that she had been narrow all her life, not to have realized until today how great a gift was the making of books. As Carruthers had said of her, she was not well read except in the classics, though, after all, it is knowledge of the classics which makes one quick to catch allusion, and certain storehouses of thought she knew line upon line.

She clasped that illuminated bit of pasteboard closer in her fingers. Nothing had ever been so precious to her. "Dedication. To V. I. R." Her ecstasy pained her, and the slow tears started, though they did not fall.

For when she felt them start, because she almost never yielded to them, she rose quickly, and moved about the room, bending her slight figure over this trifle and that, striving to distract her mind from her too exquisite dreamings. She turned over this bronze and that book, and she stopped at last beside a window, and looked out through the leaded panes into the wet street; for a light drizzling rain was falling, and the pavements were shining with a strange, greenish light.

She was a slender woman, was Victoria Regis, not tall, yet giving the impression of height because of the royal setting of her head upon her lovely shoulders. Her hands and her

arms were beautiful, and so was her foot, small even for a woman as small as she. In body and spirit she was a thoroughbred, filled with subtle delicacies of thought and feeling which set her apart forever from all save the very few who might understand. Her eyes were more blue than gray, and her hair was pale, but not lifeless brown. She wore blue much, more than any other color, and she was wearing that color today, a soft pastel hue in a clinging crêpe which fell close about her slim, straight figure.

In turning at last from watching the dull, wet street, she faced full a beautiful Venetian cabinet hanging against the opposite wall, usually locked, but today the door swung ajar, and as she saw it, her eyes widened, and her lips smiled. It was her husband's old-world hiding-place for his own first copies of his books. He had shown them to her one day, the single row of thin, beautifully bound volumes. His early poems, and his first book of critical essays which had brought him fixed attention, the novel which brought him first fame, not wide, but fame worth while; and the other three—six in all. This one forthcoming, "Mary, Queen," would be the seventh, the number all perfect. And again her mysticism showed in her eyes. Numbers meant nothing, of course, but the thought that this was truly the seventh child of his genius delighted her.

She took them down slowly, one by one. She had had them down before, had read them, every one, for she had her own copies of them, each with its own perfect inscription to her. She was holding his book of poems, his first book, and it opened of itself at the dedication page. She read it with a throbbing heart. "To M. C." Ah, that good friend of theirs, Malcolm Carruthers! It was fitting that Duane's first work should be given to him, best of friends!

She realized at this instant that she had not thought before to take special notice of his books' dedications, and she blushed for her obtuseness

as she took down volume after volume. All of the dedicatory inscriptions were simple; all but one of the honored ones she knew. That set of initials, "To E. D. N.," puzzled her. She ran over in her mind all of her husband's dearest friends, and she could not place that person. "E. D. N.!" She resolved to ask Regis about it that night, and then she began to take the books from the table where she had piled them, and to place them again in the cabinet, conscious of an ever so slight depression of her high spirits. She so longed to know all of Duane's life, as perfectly as he must know hers, and every now and then she felt herself brought up helplessly against some new life current whose sweep she felt, and whose source she did not know. "E. D. N.!" It must be someone, dear, and at one time very near. She felt today as if dedications were solemn, sacred things.

She slipped the sixth book, Regis's latest, into its place at the end of the row, with a thrilling thought of that perfect seventh which would soon take its place alongside, and so fill to completeness the sparsely filled shelf. As she did so, her fingers slipped along a polished surface which was not the wall of the cabinet, but rather something lodged against it. She felt her heart stop with a curious premonition, and her hand paused in harmony. She took out the obstructing object, a book, bound beautifully, in gray and gold.

"The Court of Love," she read. "By Duane Regis." Her eyes darkened; she turned to the title-page. Again she read the title and the author's name. The Danube Press was responsible, and the year of publication was five years back. The leaf shook in her hand as she turned to the next page. She shut her eyes against what she was to read, and then looked full upon the Latinized type. The dedication was a simple thing: "To Beatrice."

V

THE cadences of Regis's voice still lingered in the room. Carruthers sat

nearer him, the softened glare of the drop-light frosting to almost pure whiteness his gray head. His elbows were on his chair-arm, and his long fingers touched each other, after his invariable fashion when intent on the weighing of values. Victoria sat further away, her chair turned more toward the leaping fire than toward her husband. Her hands were folded in her lap, as still as she herself. Hardly once had she moved through all that evening; her head lay back against her chair, and her eyes were closed. Her white throat, rising free and lovely from her half-round bodice, throbbed slightly.

A thin, silvery stroke rang through the room, and the silence therein. Carruthers drew himself up, and pulled out his timepiece.

"As I am a living man!" he remarked. He leaned across the table which separated them, and held out his hand to Regis. "From eight, to one o'clock in the gray morning!" he said briefly. "Time shouldn't be mentioned—I know that—but it is the best possible gauge of this feat of yours. My dear fellow, it is wonderful, wonderful!"

"You believe that?" Regis laid down the single page he held, and bent forward, his sensitive, fine face full of feeling. "You have never lied to me, Carruthers. Once you almost angered me, because you would not see things as I saw them—and you were right then—I have never said that to you before. You were right. This thing, too, is intense, touches full on elemental things. Remember that. And remember this: I shall not take this bit or that bit out to suit you or any man, Carruthers, nor shall I consent to paint any bit of thinly moral drapery in. I will paint draped figures, and I will paint nude ones. I will never do mere shimmerettes. You objected once, when I painted nakedly; then your objection was right——"

"What you did then, Regis, was to paint your nudities holding masks to their faces," interposed Carruthers. "It was French method without French style. I knew you would see it some

time. This thing here, nude and unashamed, proves it. It is great, elemental, daring, wonderful. I am proud and delighted to publish it."

Their hands fell apart upon the table, and Carruthers looked toward the silent woman.

"And not the least of this brilliant success is yours, Mrs. Regis," he said.

Regis turned quickly, as Victoria's eyes unclosed. The glory of his dream still gripped him. Simply because she, unlike Carruthers, was without his range of vision, he had all but forgotten her presence. Yet she was not looking at him, but at Carruthers.

"Oh, no, not that," she said to him, with a swift, silencing gesture. "But I am dumb before it! That anything could go so deep—and not shock one—it is wonderful."

Carruthers's eyes smiled, as he looked again on Regis.

"What did I tell you!" he murmured. "Your French nudities—masked—how could she have listened to them! This one comment of hers tells the elemental purity of this thing which you have done—and her share in it!" he added, not precisely to himself, but in effect that. For Regis was already standing by Victoria's chair.

"Malcolm is altogether right," he said. He lifted one of her hands to his, and held it up against his face. "It is yours, Victoria, as I never dreamed it, until tonight. Every line told me that, while I read it to you. Not the woman in it—she is as unlike you as midnight to dawn. But the thing that is greater than the character—the handling thereof, the point of view, the sanity, the healthfulness, the ethics——"

He paused, laughing, and looked toward Carruthers. "I suppose it may be granted, once in a lifetime, to mortal man, to *know* he has achieved, and, in exceptional cases, to know why. There it lies, the achievement——" he nodded toward the scattered pages. "And here is the cause therefor." He bent and kissed his wife with passionate tenderness.

Carruthers looked on, a little

amazed. He would not have said before that such depth of loving was in Regis. It was not abandon; it was depth. As for her, there was no mortal measure for sounding the deeps in her eyes as she raised them to his. Carruthers caught himself half-way through a sigh, and checked it sternly.

In another moment Victoria rose and came over to the table, where lay the scattered manuscript. Carruthers looked at her intently as she stood there, touching with tremulous fingers the disarranged sheets. A sense of the real sadness of her story came over him with unusual force. She was alive with temperament, and so long as she lived, she could never get entirely away from the shadow of her Puritan childhood, with its harsh, senselessly ugly environment. Several times during the reading he looked over at her, in voluntary doubt as to how she would take this argument, this iconoclastic statement. If he had had any doubts, which he had not, as to the latent values of this new book of Regis's, her single comment would have silenced them forever. That the theme thereof should have so triumphed over that strain in her which could never be eradicated, and which by all rights should never have been allowed to develop within her, to overshadow more or less deadeningly her really great talents, was a victory for it, the like of which Regis could hardly meet with anywhere else.

She stood, touching the leaves reverently, hardly hearing the talk which had sprung up between the two men. Carruthers's mind was already busied with the practical questions of publication.

"It must *not* be illustrated," he said. "There is hardly an artist living who could catch the atmosphere of the time, and he would be probably so ground to powder between the stones of accuracy and detail as to lose the spirit of things entirely."

"Yes," she heard him say a little later. "On the whole I don't think of a better name. It suits the book, and should be interesting to the general

public. There's a religious savor about it which will make the sardonic grin, and which may tend to catch the multitude. On the whole we may call things settled to the last detail."

"Everything suits," Regis exclaimed quickly. "Even this!" He scribbled something on a loose sheet and passed it across to Carruthers. "Look at the initials!" he said gaily. "Isn't it delicious—the entire thing, the whole royal book!"

Carruthers read and smiled. Then he glanced at Victoria, who was bending over a page.

"Of a royal woman, to a royal woman!" he said, with unwitting repetition of Regis's words of the afternoon. With his charming, infectious smile, he held out the scribbled sheet to her.

So lost was she in her reading that, if the repeated words had not caught her ear, it is doubtful if she would have heard. But she looked up, startled, her eyes still shining with joy intense, and looked on the penciled line: "To V. I. R."

Such mortal change Carruthers never saw come over any face as swept hers. She caught at the table to steady herself, and turned to Regis.

"No, no, no!" she uttered painfully. "Don't do that, Duane. Don't!"

Regis turned and stared before he comprehended. Then he spoke vigorously. "Not do this, dedicate this thing to you, which is you! It shall never be printed without those letters on a fair white page. Dearest, what has come over you?—you were glad this afternoon, and now, tonight, you tell me not to give this to you."

She looked for a second at Carruthers, and that genial friend saw her catch after the story her eyes were telling, and close them for a moment against the world. She opened them full on Regis.

"I hadn't heard it then," she murmured. "It is—too great—"

"A lie!" vowed Carruthers to himself, while Regis laughed and silenced her altogether.

"A noble lie!" he said again, after

he had bidden them good night, at two o'clock, and was driving home through the lonely streets. He was still pondering over that awful change in a woman's face; that instant plunge from happiness to torment. A phrase from his academic days rose up from its lodging-place in his brain, and repeated itself insistently and not altogether fittingly—a phrase from the Miltonic version of the fall of the Luciferic host:

Nine days they fell Hell at last
Yawning received them whole, and on them
closed. 77

Almost as fearful a fall had she endured—in one second's time! And what could it mean? For, all the evening, after the reading had once begun, she had been as one uplifted.

When he began to go slowly over his earlier memories of the evening, the dinner-hour, and the hour before that, he saw that there had been, then, a difference. Yes, there had been a difference; but with what marvelous control these frail women are gifted, to mask themselves so completely! Even that great change which had swept over her face would have escaped him had he not chanced that moment to be looking at her as she stood in the full glare of light. He sincerely wished it had. He had been so content in the thought of their contentment, so happy in the knowledge of their happiness. He had feared the outcome of such marriage as theirs had to be, with their temperaments so dissimilar, and had rejoiced that his fears were baseless things. Whatever the trouble, Regis did not know it, yet. And would not—Carruthers would vow that. These jades of sensitive women—she liked the book—he would swear to that by any oath. Then why—why—why—and through all his questionings of the blank wall he faced, Milton's unadorned statement of the Satanic fall asserted itself in jerky rhythms: "Nine days they fell—" Milton's idea of the space intervening between heaven and hell!

VI

MRS. CORT-REGIS'S small drawing-

room was empty of all life save the vivid fire—if so pagan a view of flame may stand in this conventional age—when Carruthers was shown into it a few days after Regis's reading of his "Mary, Queen." As he sat down before it, prepared to wait the usual interminable time which was the lot of man who called on a day not Beatrice's at-home one, and at an hour which was undeniably woman's for rest and napping, his mind harked back instantly to the memory which had not left him since that night, the sight of Victoria Regis's face as she raised it to her husband's in that moment of horrible descent.

In his thought over the cause therefor he had exhausted all his logic, speculation and intuition; and he had felt a twinge of irritation that he had not enough self-control to drop the matter entirely as one without his province, and as something distinctly not his business. What concern of his was it into what hell Victoria Regis was fallen, whether into one lying ready for her, or one of her own creating! But he was powerless to help his worry, absurd and illogical and meddlesome as it was. The marriage had been so fine a thing, so cloudless until now, and even now, so far as Carruthers saw, the fineness was still Regis's, the cloud had not enveloped him. It was the woman who was suffering, and Carruthers felt pangs for her, being fond of this quiet, gifted, curiously mature and piteously stunted woman, fonder than he had known before this incident.

He felt a swift hatred of that cruel environment of her youth, from which she could never escape, which would track her and hound her all her days, scourging her with weighted whips whenever she slightly transgressed what that environment had made her moral nature. He surmised something of the battle she had fought with her soul before she had let her love lead her. This sea of desperate pain, into which she was sinking now, must have its feedings and ultimate sources from that sealed past but how could

it have swelled to such waves of desolate sorrow! He owned at last, before Mrs. Cort-Regis's fire, the purpose of his visit here this afternoon; to find, if he might, whether or not Beatrice Cort-Regis was in any way responsible for this break in Victoria's joy.

As she came into the room he rose. "Am I pardoned," he asked her, "for disturbing the rest, the reading—what not?"

"The moping!" said Mrs. Cort-Regis decisively. "I have had a fiendish day. The rain is driving me wild, and my thoughts are driving me crazy. I tried to get someone to lunch with me, and everyone I wanted enough to ask could not come. I tried to get two people to dine with me tonight, and they refused. I did not think of you once, but you have come, and you cannot get away—really, Malcolm, I am thoroughly in earnest. You *shall* dine with me—the question is non-debatable."

"I must send a message at least," protested Carruthers weakly, after the servant for whom Mrs. Cort-Regis rang had come and gone with her mistress's orders, delivered imperturbably through all his protestations. "I really have an important engagement for tonight—I must send word at least that I cannot come."

"Write it," said his hostess cordially, pointing to a delightful little writing-desk, "and consider your messenger at the door. I myself shall call him."

She came back from the telephone just as Carruthers was addressing his letter.

"How joyous!" she cried, with the frank pleasure of a child in having gained her point. "You wrote quickly, and I telephoned quickly, and the messenger station is not two blocks from here—and here the child comes now, running, Malcolm! Give him some pennies for good luck—no, my own pennies, Malcolm, because I am so glad I have a guest tonight. Now, with that off your mind, draw up to the fire, and enjoy yourself, dear friend!"

Carruthers laughed as he drew out his cigarettes. "My joy is tempered,"

he said, as he leaned comfortably back, "by your naïvely impersonal pleasure in my guestship."

"Because I did not think of you in all my list of invited ones? Well, the truth, the truth, though I perish in my shame! I thought of you first, last and always, and I did not send for you—the truth again—because I am in too much of a mood to care to have you see me therein. But having come of your own accord, I have kept you, regardless of the opinion of my temper and morbidity which you will carry away with you."

"Ah, Beatrice, Beatrice!" Carruthers murmured, "if only all that *were* the truth—that you thought of me, and did not wish me to see you at an imagined disadvantage—I should perhaps let myself indulge in a wee bit of puerile hope—"

Mrs. Cort-Regis raised a hand of finest mould. "After all," she added, to the significant gesture, "what is life and friendship worth between men and women if it have not the touch of delicious foolery about it, the savor of sentiment—merely the savor, Malcolm—and you are wise, too, to know it. I dare say you would have stopped just where you did, if I had not stopped you."

"You are right," Carruthers agreed cordially. "I should have stopped just there. For a small, upflung hand will not stop me, Beatrice, when I am determined to go on."

"What a beautiful ending to a rainy day!" she murmured. "I've always said of you, Malcolm, that you make love too perfectly, that it is a liberal education to be made love to by a man such as you."

"You are too good," Carruthers made dry reply. "And you are speaking—all your fault—more from intuition than by the card."

He bent toward her after a bit as the silence between them deepened.

"Merely an attack of megrims?" he asked her lightly. "Nothing special?"

"Nothing special!" with obvious lightness. "I'm merely beset by riddles and unanswerable queries,

and I insist on asking them, in the warning face of previous experiences. Do you feel like music? Let me play you something—perhaps the little devils that torment me will slip away through my finger-tips."

Carruthers listened while crashing chords and aching defiant melodies poured from the piano. There was nothing of similarity in the musical gifts of these two women whom his friend had married. Victoria's was unquestionably the finer gift, for hers was but little short of proven genius, but on Beatrice's own chosen ground she could hardly be excelled. She began to sing at last, snatches from everything known and unknown, and finally took up the song Carruthers could never hear her sing without anger—anger at the composer, the singer, himself, the universe—"Mohacs Field." She had not finished the first stanza before his voice rang out above hers.

"Stop that!" Her fingers fell with a discord on the keys, so startled was she, and then with an irritated little laugh she rose and came back to him.

"Do you know," she said coolly, "that for the moment I thought you were Duane! He shrieked that command—just so—madly out at me one night—just as you did then! What is there about it? Am I to induce the general truth that all men do not like the masterly thing, since you—and he—do not?"

Carruthers looked at her with keenness. He saw the slight tremor of her hands and the flaring firelight beneath her face cast its pallor into shocking distinctness, intensifying, too, the jetty blackness of her lashes and the slumberous fire of her eyes.

"Do you know," he said slowly, "the more I see of the actualities of human life, the more sternly I hold to the belief that narrow views thereof are the best ones for us all to hold and follow! Human instinct—that is what we should not dare to override, and I am convinced beyond shadow of doubt that the strongest instinct in humanity is the taking of one wife or one husband, and cleaving thereunto

till death part them. Oh, my dear Beatrice, I know all the arguments—I know that the Stone Men held many wives—but I do not believe it—I am I talking arrant nonsense? I dare say any ethnologist would tell me so. The rotten thing we call knowledge!"

"Ah, Malcolm," said Beatrice gently. "Have I inoculated you with the bacteria of my own disease! Forgive me! I have always held you to be disgustingly optimistic!"

Carruthers did not smile, but continued to stare moodily at her, as she sat across from him, her restless fingers tapping gently at the arms of her chair.

"I've been thinking, while I've been listening to you, groping for the significance of your sudden attack of memory just now, and your emotion thereat—you, woman of the world, who talk and almost believe in the abolishment of all marriage, and yet who are shaken by its power as you were shaken now—and I am wondering how terrible must be that child's situation, that child he has married!"

"You are dreaming, Malcolm," said Beatrice in a level, displeased voice. "My emotion?"

"Oh, we sha'n't argue," said Carruthers. "You know!"

She laughed grimly. "Habit is a cable!" she quoted. "I learned that as a breakfast response at boarding-school without ever dreaming I should say it of such a thing! Yes, we are odd creatures, and if we are born bourgeoisie, and marry bourgeoisie, and die bourgeoisie, so much the better for us! What nonsense we are both talking! Even we are blighted partially by convention. We have things preached at us all our lives—sermons and prayers—"

Carruthers laughed in his turn. "Preached at you! You have never heard a sermon!"

"But I have mingled more times than I care to remember with the bourgeoisie," she said delicately. "And their preachings, conscious and unconscious, can give all the priests all the trumps and then take every trick. You know well, Malcolm, that the

Stone Age must have been deliriously joyous to live in——"

"I know it not," said Carruthers flatly. "I tell you it is against all right instinct—this taking of wives and husbands——"

"You have let go your attempted hold on my skirts," she retorted. "I have yet to take another husband. Speak solely of Duane, if you will be so good. He it is who has sinned against instinct, conventional living, the mighty bourgeoisie—and me!"

"And this girl," Carruthers added moodily.

Mrs. Cort-Regis bent forward, definitely sobered at last.

"What do you mean?" she asked sharply. "Is that a mistake, too—for him—for either of them? I—am sorry. I had hoped——"

"Oh, I am talking the rankest nonsense," said Carruthers, rousing into eating reproach. "No, they are happy, perfectly happy. But with her it will always be happiness in spite of——"

"Me!" finished Beatrice, with a marvelously delicate emphasis. "Well, I hardly see how I can help matters. Even my death would not take away the fact that I have lived during this last year—ah, how nonsensical to have qualms and shudders like that! We may tuck husbands and wives away beneath a gracious sod, ten deep, and be free—so—to wed ten times, but when we face a mistake and rectify it by honest law, annul our private contract, and cast our all upon the die again, then we—sin! Is that your word, Sir Bourgeois?"

"It is not my word," said Carruthers. "This is all futile tirade——"

"Now you have the word," cried Mrs. Cort-Regis gaily. "Futile! What a dreadful word it is, and how it applies to all things! Yes, such is my mood. Come, dinner is ready. I have a bottle of sherry which you are to test by every test known to connoisseurdom, and may I be accursed forever if it be found wanting in the slightest quality! That young idiot of a Frank Dysart managed it for me at the Wellses'

auction. Really, what do you see in him?"

"Nothing," replied Carruthers drily. "He is void."

They went out together to a perfect dinner, and lingered long over it. Carruthers pronounced the sherry all that was claimed for it, and granted Dysart, therefore, a modicum of sense hitherto unproven. Their talk was of all things but the things they had touched on before dinner; of books, plays, people and affairs.

VII

BUT over their coffee, in the snug little drawing-room, while the winds howled through the street without, and the rain beat against the panes with baffled fury, through silences and reveries, and finally speech, they drifted back. It was Carruthers who almost involuntarily spoke Regis's name.

"We sat through the night, until the morning, down at Regis's the other evening," he said. "Over his new novel—the best thing, Beatrice, which he has ever done."

"Really!" she cried, interest making the simple word alive. "The same thing he talked over here, with us, almost a year ago?"

"The same thing," Carruthers said musingly. "The same thing, refined and purified and full of chastened fire and chastity."

"Dear Malcolm!" breathed the woman, with a sigh. "I am almost jealous of you—jealous of that first reading—he reads gloriously!"

"He translated us," Carruthers mused on. "He made us sit through five hours as if they were five brief minutes."

"Us?" Beatrice asked softly.

"Victoria Regis and I—the woman who made it what it is, unknown to herself and unrealized of her husband."

"And therefore the one, naturally, to whom it will be dedicated," breathed Beatrice, with the faintest trace of a sneer in her voice. "How time changes standpoints!"

A memory froze Carruthers's brain; he gripped his chair arms hard, and faced her squarely. He did not speak, but his eyes questioned with irresistible interrogation.

"Surely you remember!" she said at last, responding to his eyes' imperious demand. "The poems he wrote during the first months of our marriage—for me, to me, of me—which you refused to publish, and thereby almost broke his heart: 'The Court of Love'?"

"And what came of them?" he demanded harshly.

Mrs. Cort-Regis's lips parted for speech, and then she openly caught back the words and stared into the fire. A tiny frown contracted her brow.

"What came of them, Beatrice?" Carruthers repeated steadily.

She replied briefly, without raising her eyes: "They were published."

"I never saw them," he retorted. "And I keep a close eye on current publications."

She continued to stare into the fire without replying to Carruthers's scarcely veiled insistence. Her silence provoked him to further speech at last.

"Who published them?"

"I forget," said Mrs. Cort-Regis calmly. Carruthers laughed sharply.

"You are an intelligent woman. If you don't choose to tell me—rather will not tell me—well and good! But pray do not hand me such palpable tarradiddles."

Again silence fell between them. Beatrice moved restlessly, and Carruthers lighted another cigarette. She raised her head at last and scanned his face.

"You hurt him cruelly with your harshness then," she said in a voice which thrilled with repressed feeling. "You wounded him frightfully. There was nothing left to do but—"

"He left me nothing to do but wound him," Carruthers defended. "The poems were almost flashily erotic. I don't know what ailed the boy! They were earthy—fleshly—"

"They are dedicated to me," Mrs. Cort-Regis reminded him coolly, and Carruthers caught himself up hurriedly.

"You know perfectly well what I mean—what I meant then. They were published, you say. Then they are in existence now—dedicated to you!" His voice trembled as his thought leaped in his brain.

He waited a long moment, and then he leaned toward her and touched her hand. "You will tell me about them, Beatrice," he begged. "I have the best of reasons for pressing you so hard. I don't understand how it came that I never knew they were published."

"They were not published—regularly," said Mrs. Cort-Regis hastily. "And, of course, feeling the hurt of your opinion of them as he did, Duane would never show you a copy. I think he felt all the time that you knew of their publication, and would not speak of them to him, and so added to his pain. He is so sensitive—a great, shrinking, timid—baby-boy!"

"They were not published regularly," Carruthers repeated slowly. "What do you mean by that?—not published regularly. *You published them yourself!*" He flung it at her, and leaned back in triumph to watch her vivid flush.

"There wasn't anything else to do," she murmured, after a long, embarrassed pause. She said it hesitatingly, yet stubbornly. "He was too hurt over the thing, and—two other publishers refused them. I *made* him suffer those other two humiliations, because I wanted him to have his chance. . . . Perhaps I was blinded, too—I haven't read them for years. . . . When they came back to him the third time he was sick, sick, poor boy . . . there was nothing else to do, Malcolm. He was going to burn them up before me—he did throw them into the fire . . . see!" She leaned across to him, pointing to her right wrist. Across it, on the inside, ran at him, white line, the scar of flame. "I snatched them out; I made him give them to me. I tried two other places, myself, and then I gave up, and took them to a private bindery and threw prudence to the winds. I gave him the finest paper and the finest binding and the best value for

the money expended that any publisher has ever given him. I designed the cover myself, and attended to every detail, and he knew nothing of it till I gave him the first copy. He was always easy to satisfy—the name of the Danube Press was enough for him. The company didn't handle poetry—didn't consider it salable merchandise, and I arranged myself, at a few book-stores, for the books to be displayed at least on a counter—gave the firms liberty to return every unsold copy . . . and Malcolm, Malcolm!" her voice shook, but Carruthers could not feel it was with laughter, "as time went on, every single copy, but one, was returned—only one sold!"

"And how did you satisfy him then?" Carruthers inquired drily enough, lively memories in his mind of similar situations and ensuing scenes with his own authors. He watched the same bright flush creep over her face again before he answered, again, his own question.

"You bought them back yourself! You coddled up some sort of royalty reports, and you sold out the edition. My God in heaven, what will not women do!"

"I had six hundred copies printed," she added after a time. "I thought that was a small enough number. I might have had only six, and then had too many! In my store-room, they are lying in their boxes, five hundred and ninety-eight. One copy Duane has. The other belongs to an old man living in Washington Square—that is woman's insatiable curiosity and my ubiquitous luck. When I found that the shop had sold one copy I found who had bought it. It was a regular customer, who happens to be one of the few men in America today who read poetry—he buys all the poetry which comes out. Duane never gives out copies, you know, since his first pathetic experience with his first novel, when he was so proud of his author's copies, and sent them to a dozen friends, who, like most friends of one's youth, failed utterly to appreciate his interpretation, even the motif! The friends the works themselves

make—they are the ones whose judgment is worth while, and they buy, themselves, instead of borrowing or begging! And by-and-bye, as they all came back, I grew jealous of the whole edition and his hurt, and I gathered them all together—not a hundred went out, and they were in only a few book-shops—he saw only those few displays, and his own copy——"

"I wish to God," Carruthers broke in wrathfully, "that you had in your strong-box that copy of his—that it belonged to anyone but Regis——"

"Malcolm—you mean——"

"I mean that he is dedicating this greatest thing he has done to Victoria Regis, his wife," said Carruthers grimly. "And I believe that she has just learned in some cursed way that 'The Court of Love' was printed, dedicated to the woman who was what she is now, his wife—and that the knowledge has cast her into a sea of torment, poor child! There was some strange, unqualitative difference the other night, and when he told me the dedication, 'To V. I. R.!'—ah, Beatrice, her face, her face! Thank heaven we are children of the world, you and I!"

"These sensitive ones!" breathed Mrs. Cort-Regis half-scornfully.

Carruthers turned on her almost violently. "Don't! Can't you see how horrible the whole wretched business is to her? She is in torment, and what is to be done?"

"You recommended, to me, by inference, prussic acid, a while back, my dear friend!"

Carruthers smiled grimly. "There must be other ways out of the tangles of modern life."

"A reversion to type, perhaps," suggested Beatrice. "To the delights of the Stone Age, against which you stubbornly shut your eyes—refuse to see them!"

"I wonder," mused Carruthers, after a bit, during which he shook his head impatiently at the sound of Mrs. Cort-Regis's low laugh, "if it isn't possible for that little rascal of a Jewel Moultrie to help some in this game—no, the shoe's on the other foot—it would

have to be Moultrie who must do the helping, and Moultrie is too obtusely contented an animal to care for any past so long as he has the present, and thinks he has the future."

"Malcolm, don't grow vulgar," Mrs. Cort-Regis murmured disdainfully. "Jewel made a frightful mistake in marrying Murray Danvers—everyone knows that, and anyone who has seen through their *mondanité*, to know her devotion to Walter Moultrie and his idiotic worship of her, can't fail to drop on his knees and thank God and man that there is such a thing possible as decent divorcing of undecent mates."

"I know, I know," Carruthers said. "Jewel was the one who fairly bulldozed Victoria out of first refusal into final acceptance—that is, so far as bulldozing can be effective with a moral nature such as Victoria's. I dare say it sounded as convincing as talk can sound, Jewel Moultrie's arguments for marrying a divorced man, against the fact of her two living husbands. Yet there you have it again. Jewel's position isn't Victoria's. It is Duane whose position is synonymous with——"

"Oh, don't spare *me*, this late in the conversation!" protested Beatrice ironically. "Is it possible that you mean that ignorant child is jealous of me!"

"Not jealous of you," Carruthers corrected fastidiously, but she brushed away his quibblings with an impatient hand.

"Don't varnish! Of course I know what you mean. She is resentful of—former conditions—of the state of mind which made Duane once as frantic to immortalize me on a forepage as he is now there to embody her! Poor child!"

"If only you could talk to her——" Carruthers began, but Mrs. Cort-Regis flung up her hands in violent protest.

"I should be the death of her! Never send her to me! She herself would probably insult me to the last degree. I should have things to say to her, but it would probably result in making her hate me and loathe Duane. Because I should say things

which *mondaines* like Jewel must applaud, and which would strike nuns' ears like bolts of living thunder. How sorry I am that I did not steal that one copy of Duane's from his cabinet the last time I was down there." She broke into a ringing laugh. "Do you dare suppose that child, Victoria, knows that I *have* been down there, many times, Duane's invited and welcomed guest, since our divorce, and that he has been here uncounted times, mine! I dare say not, but she would better be prepared for gossip—the shock might easily be the death of her—her finest sensibilities, at least."

"That is one thing which puzzles me," Carruthers said abruptly. "Tell me how it has come, if you can, that you have gone there, and he has come here, and that to yourselves and to others with you there has been no embarrassment, not only the lack of that paltry thing, but there has been honest congeniality and good feeling. It is unusual—you must grant that—natural as you and he have made it seem."

"Natural as it has been," corrected the woman delicately. "Neither of us, otherwise, would have endured it for a moment."

She allowed another pregnant silence to grow between them before she turned toward him with an oddly questioning look in her eyes.

"I wonder *why* you ask," she murmured. "Oh, I perceive the palpable curiosity. But the hidden reason for the question—I wonder if I know it. Well, some time I shall know."

Her low laugh irritated him, and he moved emphatically in his chair, at which she laughed again, softly.

"I can never explain it to any man," she added lightly. "You could never understand me when I say that, childless woman that I am, I care for Duane as if he were my child. It was that change in my feeling for him which made the trouble—what woman can help but feel maternal toward him?—toward any man of his type—and he resented it, and I resented it. They say, these modern reasoners, that a

wife's love is maternal, always, more or less. If that is so, I shall never be a man's wife again. This is nothing but snatches, Malcolm—you don't understand."

"I understand this," said Carruthers grimly, "that with all your *mondanité* you have the longing deep within you which thrilled your Cave Woman ancestress—the longing for your Master. You cannot feel 'maternal' toward the man who will sweep you—some day—into his arms, regardless of whether you will or won't, and make you his alone, and hold you his, for all your life. You long to fear your Master—every woman does; she cannot feel 'maternal' where she fears. But your words have truth in them—which I never saw before—when you speak of Duane's type, and the feeling which he must inspire, and all his kind after him, in women. Yet I don't think that *she* will resent the change in feeling—I see it must come."

"But it will hurt!" breathed Beatrice Cort-Regis. "It will bruise her deepest instincts and hurt her pride in him. There are worse things in life, of course, but she will not think so. Yet she can probably endure—will endure—what I would not and could not. She will do what I never would do—shut her eyes. My eyes will always be open."

"Too widely open!" assented Carruthers, still grimly. "Seeing through strata which no human eye has ever disturbed before, and stirring up all sorts of rows which Everyman's God has been saving for the teeth and mettle of His creatures a million generations off. But you are a fine woman, Beatrice," he added abruptly, rising without more ado, to go. "A fine woman. Somehow I feel that some time—some way—you can help her. And when you can, you will. That is a good deal to affirm of a woman."

VIII

It was only the next afternoon that a carriage stopped before Mrs. Cort-

Regis's home, and Jewel Moultrie stepped from it.

"I know it's not your day," she cried as Beatrice came into the drawing-room. "That is precisely why I came. You were lying down—don't apologize—you look charming. Just let me come upstairs to your room, please. I am here to gossip like a fishmonger."

Mrs. Cort-Regis laughed good-humoredly, and took her guest upstairs to her own private sitting-room, and sent for tea, and stretched herself in a lounging-chair to listen to what she knew not, until Mrs. Moultrie opened fire with a startling gambit.

"Beatrice," she asked abruptly, "have you and Victoria Regis ever met?"

Mrs. Cort-Regis raised her beautiful, black eyebrows in uncontrollable surprise, but her voice issued as sleepily as ever from her lips.

"The pleasure has not been mine, Jewel."

"Pray don't be hateful and catty!" Mrs. Moultrie retorted, with angry pleading. "I am worried to death. I hoped, when she once gave up what she thought perhaps she ought to do for what she wanted to do, and married the man she loved, that there'd be no more trouble. But, dear heaven, it looks as if trouble had just begun—after all I went through six months before she was married—and I came by here in despair, to *plead* with you to make yourself as unobtrusive as possible for a while—Beatrice, don't flash at me like that! I never knew you so ill-tempered before. Of course; of course! I know you don't run after Duane, and that you could be great friends, if it were not for this unfortunate marriage."

Mrs. Cort-Regis surveyed her visitor distastefully for a moment, and then yielded to the imperious dictates of her sense of humor, and laughed, ringingly, almost hysterically.

"When you lose all your tact, at one sweep, and descend to mere blurring and bleating," she observed equably, "it must mean something monstrous is at stake. Have you come here to tell

me what it is? You know I'm not inquisitive."

"But I know that you are interested," Mrs. Moultrie rejoined, with alarming frankness. "Now, Beatrice, don't raise your hand in that indifferent way. Look at me, and my uncontrollable interest, *yet*, in Murray Danvers. And consider, if you will, the frightful difference between him and Duane. Duane is thoroughly nice and lovable—and Murray was a horror of a man. And yet, even now, I am keenly interested in his life. I don't mean that I should ever be betrayed into speaking to him again, because I should not—things went too deep for that. But I am entirely certain that if he ever marries again, I shall find out what church the woman goes to—the next woman he marries will go to church devoutly, and will touch neither flesh, fish nor fowl, during Lent—and I shall go there myself some Sunday morning, and pay an usher to point her out to me, and then sit there, and study her all through the different prayers from—call it what you will, curiosity, if you choose. Because it's illuminating to watch your influence still working in subtle ways. And whether a woman wishes it or not, she can't help it—she's interested, vitally, however great the separating gulf. And therefore, you are interested in Duane Regis still."

"Well, granted," said Mrs. Cort-Regis indifferently. "He was in and out often enough here, for three years after our divorce, in fact, until he married again, for all our world to perceive that we were interested in some inscrutable way, each in the other. All that stopped on his second marriage, naturally enough. Except under extraordinary circumstances, it couldn't have gone on, you know."

"I should say not," ejaculated Mrs. Moultrie sharply. "Not when he married Victoria Ingraham, who is saturated with conventions and Puritanisms. And, of course, I'm perfectly certain that you haven't a grain of the manger-dog in your disposition, dearest—even if you had a leaning that way, it couldn't have lasted after you

had looked once on their happiness together. Really it almost brought the pitying tears to my eyes, to see Victoria's utter yielding, for the first time in all her starved little life, to sheer joy of living. And it lasted without a cloud up to a week ago—certainly up to a week ago, because Walter and I were down to dine with them only a week ago, and we were all absurdly in love with each other. And I went down to see her today, and the life has gone out of her, Beatrice, *has gone out of her!* I tried to find out the trouble—I am absurdly fond of the quaint, silly thing—but I learned months ago that when she locks up her soul, it is *locked!* That is where all my tact went, in sounding her, and because I got no results after an hour's moil and toiling, I stormed up here—and insulted you!"

Mrs. Cort-Regis laughed again from pure amusement. "Dearest Jewel!" she murmured. "How can I help! I have never seen her in my life—I am not confessing to the wantonness of your curiosity—I have never even tried to see her; and I have seen Duane only once since his marriage to her. That was during the holidays, just after their return to town, when I was shopping, and we met at Tiffany's, and the great boy—Jewel, actually!—asked me which of two pendants Victoria would prefer."

"You never advised him!" gasped Mrs. Moultrie, her face all alight. "Perhaps that is what she has found out—or some sentimental thing exactly like it."

"Not I! But for three years of freedom and friendship he had asked my advice, and he didn't see the incongruity—shall we say that?—until after he asked the question. Then he stammered and looked all ways, and we said a few banal things and passed on. No, it couldn't be the matter of the pendant possibly—was it the moonstone, Jewel?"

"It was the pink pearl," Mrs. Moultrie responded absently. "A perfect beauty of a pendant."

"So glad!" murmured Mrs. Cort-

Regis. "I was so afraid he would take the moonstone because it was East Indian workmanship—and he adores all Oriental—" She stopped herself with contemptuous abruptness, and then laughed softly to herself. How horrible it was to know so completely another human being's trend of mind and action, and how sardonically humorous! She honestly hated herself for laughing, but she could not help it.

She leaned further back in her chair, and reflected silently. She had not forgotten for an hour of these sixteen intervening hours Carruthers's revelations. If his baseless surmisings were true—if indeed Victoria had found "The Court of Love," then she was in verity battling with the ghosts of the past. She saw it so clearly that she could say no word of it to Jewel Moultrie, fond, reckless Jewel! It was her own perception, but that which she perceived was not hers.

Mrs. Moultrie had been lost in thought for several minutes, but now she looked up despairingly.

"Why *do* people—some people—take divorce so seriously?" she asked. "What is it, after all, but a setting right of mistakes? How can people possibly think it wrong? And yet Victoria wasted *pounds* trying to make up her mind one way or another, when it was a case of love at sight with both of them. Malcolm Carruthers has told me about that first time he took Duane to see her, and how instantly they fitted into each other's spirits. And yet, because he had been once married, and that woman still lives—"

"Ah, don't!" murmured Beatrice, half-whimsically, half-hurt. "This is the second time in twenty-four hours that I have been all but told that her way out lies in my suicide!"

"The second time!" cried Mrs. Moultrie. "Who in the world was the first one—before me?" Her black eyes almost closed, and then she opened them wide, and, after her fashion, leaped straight across the hurdles of logic, at Truth, clearing every obstacle, as she almost always did.

"You've seen Malcolm!" she cried. "And he, too, knows that there is trouble!"

"Jewel, Jewel!" protested her friend. "If only you would ever pause for the reason of things, how much less trouble you would be, to yourself and to others."

"Then it is true!" asserted Mrs. Moultrie, with unruffled temper. "Malcolm knows there is trouble of some sort—does he know what?"

"He does not know," replied Mrs. Cort-Regis, with a delicate emphasis which saved her words from being a verbal lie, an emphasis which fortunately slipped past Mrs. Moultrie's keen ear. The latter pursued firmly her conversational path.

"Because if he does, he should come to me first of all, since I am Victoria's cousin, and, in a sense, her chaperon. Oh, you may smile, but for all her married title, she is in more need of matronly counsel and advice than any school-girl. And if it should turn out to be really Duane's fault—"

"Nonsense!" said Beatrice curtly. "Duane worships her—worships her, I tell you. If she chooses to break the thing up through fancies—"

"She is morbid about divorce," Mrs. Moultrie asserted angrily. "I dare say some foolish thing—that is why I came to you directly, to find out whether in some unheard-of way you could be at the bottom of it all and therefore could explain it."

"I daresay, in some unheard-of way, I am at the bottom of it, and can explain it," Beatrice said musingly. "Jewel, has it ever occurred to you that perhaps Walter may sometimes be confronted with memories of the time when you belonged elsewhere than in his home?"

"You are disgustingly frank," Mrs. Moultrie said angrily. "No! Walter knows that I loath the thought of Murray Danvers; that when I compare him to Murray, he is nothing less than a god. How could he be jealous of such a brute!"

"After all, that isn't the point," Mrs. Cort-Regis said, her blue eyes glowing palely beneath their delicate lashes.

"Suppose that you, Jewel, were married to a divorced man—suppose Walter to be that man, if you will imagine—would there never come times, even to you, you reckless, happy-go-lucky bit of modernity, when you would wonder in spite of yourself, when he kissed you, when he held you in his arms, whether he were thinking of you only then, or of the woman who had been his wife, granted always that she still lived! It must be easy to forget them when they are lying in graveyards, but when they live and walk the earth——"

Jewel Moultrie spoke resentfully. "You are dreadful. Anyway, it is all right as it is, because if women are fanciful, men aren't. Walter *never* has creeps like that."

"But Victoria is no more than a woman, Jewel. And here am I alive, a woman who was, hardly more than three years ago, Duane's wife."

There was a little shocked pause on Jewel's part. Beatrice got slowly up, and walked the length of her room and back.

"Of course I might go abroad to live," she said at last. Her voice was peculiarly full of pathos, and she felt suddenly very desolate. "Oh, you needn't look at me in so surprised a fashion. I should do a good deal to save a happy marriage from wrecking on such a reef as I. And I dare say ghosts do walk at times for her—because to every woman come moments when she perceives with all the myriad eyes of her soul that for her, after all, the life of the man she has married is a secret thing, a thing apart; that he may be living this or thinking that or longing for something—or someone—else; and she does not know, and dare not question, and cannot know; and can find peace only by shutting her eyes against sights that a fleeting glance has told her may disturb them. She may be living through such moments now, for the first time, poor child. Oh, this is nothing at all against Duane. It is simple fact. A woman's life lies open to the eyes of her husband; a man's life is his own, save as he chooses

to share it. And not one man in a hundred thousand has sense enough, even if he has a life which could bear moderate inspection, to admit his wife fully into it. They are obtuse brutes, Jewel—and they never learn, neither by years nor after centuries."

"Oh, your getting out of the country wouldn't do any good," said Mrs. Moultrie dolefully, "if it's a matter of latent jealousy of you. The gods have given her a love which falls to the lot of few women—why hasn't she common sense enough to take the goods they give, and let the rest go hang, you included? I wish she could have heard you just now, Beatrice," she added generously. "You were fine."

"Oh, fine!" Mrs. Cort-Regis said contemptuously. "I've always fancied I should end up in London, anyway. Only, that doesn't destroy memories, ghosts."

"Well," remarked her guest, with doubtful inflection, "it's done no good to talk—we've got nowhere. But I was ready to scream with pent-up annoyance when I left her this afternoon. She looks so small and pinched and pitiful, and she is one of these horribly silent women. I never could get more than just so far with her, ever. But I feel a sort of responsibility about her and this marriage. I wish I'd left all the persuading to Duane—he had tongue enough for it, and far more motive than I—as it is, part of whatever blame accrues is mine; I must grant it."

After her impetuous visitor had taken herself and her woes away, Beatrice Cort-Regis sank again into her chair, whose comfort did not comfort her.

"Poor child!" she said at length. "I daresay she can never be sure, no matter what all of us say, she can never be sure, that she alone is in his heart. It is not that she fears he loves me still, but it is those passing memories of me which she shrinks from and can't endure. These sensitive souls! And Duane is blundering—I can feel it. I can see him, hear him. And that is another thing for her to resent, my

intimate knowledge of him! Poor child!"

IX

AND truly, during this week, following her painful discovery, Victoria was a woman fit for pity. She tried to shut her pain away, and succeeded in doing it to this extent at least, that it was more patent to everyone else than to her husband. Regis was carefree with the sense of freedom which came to him only after the completion of a long piece of work, and he was enjoying his clubs and the theatres and human companionship with a zest which permitted an excusable ignoring of so slight a thing as Victoria's outward manifestations of troubled mind. On the night on which Regis read it aloud the completed novel had been put away. Victoria had witnessed its entombment in a drawer of Regis's desk, where it reposed for its period of ripening and his period of reinforcement for the task which still lay before him, of drafting it a final time; and she heard with inexpressible relief that it was laid aside at least until early Summer. She shrank painfully from it.

For all her questionings, which she had thought answered forever, came back upon her; and all the churchly arguments against her marriage to Regis, all the priestly dogmas which make divorce primarily spiritual, regardless of the sex-controlled bondage of man. And added to these old arguments were the new ones which the fact of her marriage had given her.

She had been brave enough—or mad enough—she did not know which—to go with her Cousin Jewel and Walter Moultrie and Regis into another state, to be married there—legally. She had surrendered her church's minister and her church's marriage service, since it frowned upon her union to a man divorced from his living wife upon casual grounds; and had been married by a chance preacher of one of the hundred and one inter-

pretations of the Scriptures, and neither he nor the brief service he read stood for anything solemn or sacred to her. She had faced too many solemn dogmas and churchly laws, to break them, one by one, for anything save the inner imperative to seem sacred to her. She had been brave enough to walk past lion after lion in her path. But she never dreamed that, having conquered those roaring beasts, others more ominous and terrifying would slink across her future way.

Before her marriage she had listened in silence to what little Regis had to tell her of Beatrice. In what he said he had been generous to a fault. He had made her see that it was pure incompatibility of temper and nerves which forbade any hope of their working out a common, ultimate salvation, and that, since neither of them was one who could live patiently under bonds broken to atoms in the spirit, they broke them in fact, to become then excellent friends. He did not tell her, however, of the many evenings he and Carruthers had spent during those three free years at Mrs. Cort-Regis's charming home, or of his own delightful dinners given to the little group of intimates, a group of which he and she were potent parts. He felt, and rightly, that such needless confession would involve him and Victoria in an endless maze of argument and worse, and he was too well aware of just how little, in the sense she required, this meant to him to care or to dare risk the telling thereof. His task was hard enough, at best; there was no great need or good of adding to it.

But he had been generous to Beatrice, which was no credit to him indeed, considering that it was her fault no more than his, that their marriage had not turned out well. He had spoken briefly of her gifts, of her beauty, of the happiness of their first half year together, and the swift disillusioning which had come to both of them, and which both of them endured until two years of marriage were rounded out. Then, having ful-

filled his whole duty so far as enlightening her as to that past was required of him, he devoted all his remaining energies to convincing her that nothing mattered—nothing—save the force which drew them from the first irresistibly to each other. And after many months, and more discouragements, he induced her not only to marry him, but to wed him in an alien state, to be married to him by an alien priest, and then, travesty on travesty, to return with him to live with him in a state which would not countenance their marriage rites within its boundaries. Truly, his task had been mighty and his success correspondingly great. But neither did he, in his ignorance, dream, having conquered his own lions, that others, fiercer jawed, waited only a little further down his path and hers.

For Victoria was learning at last the appalling strength of the natural arguments against divorce. She had not counted on the revulsion of her spirit, after marriage, against the other living woman who had been her husband's wife, against the imaginings which thronged her brain of those other days, that other love; against the doubts which came in spite of her of the stability of love; against the morbid fear that even this marriage, so perfect now, might prove to be only a second mistake. It took wifedom, and such wifedom as was hers to teach her all these natural arguments against what her church had set its face.

This dedication of his book to her was so precious, so sacred, so filled with love, that her appreciation was intense, and its very intensity only showed her, with appalling distinctness, what that other dedication, "To Beatrice," must have held once, of love and sacredness. If such love as that had been could perish utterly and be no more—and Regis had sworn to that—why might not a like fate overtake this love of hers and his, so beautiful now, and yet founded, perhaps, on sand!

At all events, with every passing hour, it seemed more and more impossible to her that she could endure the blazoning of her name on a page where

that other woman's name had stood before hers, was standing yet, a monument, mute and eloquent, to the frailty of human love, the ephemeral quality of human passion. She did not even dream how a like ending to their love, his and hers, could come about, and yet she realized poignantly that she knew but little of Regis. The realization which Beatrice Cort-Regis had foreseen for her was hard upon her, pressing her close. She respected and admired his silence about everything but the main facts of his first marriage, and yet it seemed to her at times that nothing could ever satisfy her fears short of full knowledge of the inner soul of Beatrice Cort. She reached the point at last where she craved right and speech of Beatrice. Before her marriage she had thought Regis's friendship for his former wife was a broad and beautiful thing—more than all things else it had comforted her. She found herself wishing now that he hated her with all his heart; she grew to fear that friendship.

Yet she passed into her storm and stress of spirit without attracting from Regis any concern which went deeper than passing anxiety over her paleness, an anxiety which, if expressed, brought a rush of color and an intent interest in him and his affairs; and only Caruthers, therefore, who had seen with eyes which could not be mistaken, and Jewel Moultrie, who had perceived by virtue of her infamous intuition, utterly barren of logic and utterly sure, were aware of any rift.

Against them Victoria fortified herself with all her power, power which was becoming less and less guileless as the slow days went by, bringing the Summer nearer and nearer and with it the month which Regis was pledged to fill with work upon the final drafting of his "Mary, Queen."

X

"I SHALL begin work today," Regis said suddenly.

It was a sunny morning in late May, and Victoria, sitting opposite him at

the breakfast-table, laid this morning in the music-room, looked up at him with eyes from which a quiet happiness fled.

"Work?" she murmured.

Regis answered her briefly. "The final drafting."

Hushed by his abstraction, she poured his coffee for him silently, a few spoonfuls of black liquid which stained the cup as it fell into it, and then on it the rich, hot milk. Then, without touching her own cooling cup, she sat, watching him absently as he drank. He had been ill two weeks before, with a slight touch of fever which had terrified her for a few days, fearful as she became that it might develop into the dreaded typhoid, and he was hardly strong even now, but she looked with gladness, in the midst of her disquiet, on the red, faint but clear, which stained his cheeks. During this fortnight past she had tended him as if he were a helpless child; all the impulse of protection which lies dormant in women had rushed to full flower in these days of care, and that special tenderness for weakness was still her dominant impulse.

In some mysterious manner she discovered herself to be looking on him this morning with new eyes, the eyes with which she had gazed on him when he lay weak and suffering and irritable on his sick-bed. She had been strength for his weakness, and relief for his suffering, and tranquillity for his irritation; and, being all these, she had seen him, no less lovingly, but with eyes for the first time shorn of all passionate glamour; and it was with these same eyes that she looked on him today, even while the red was in his cheeks and the sparkle in his eyes.

But Duane Regis, his fine features a little more sharply chiseled, it may well be, by the hand of illness, sat across from her, serenely unconscious of the subtle change in feeling which had come over from his illness and still abode with her, and she knew his unconsciousness thereof, and was glad. Her eyes lingered on his fine face, foreign-looking to a degree, with his high forehead, sloping backward with

that angle which shows not weakness but strength, his long, finely modeled nose, his full, tremulous lips, so sensitive they were almost vibrant, and his dark, silken hair. His eyes, like his hair, were dark, and they glowed slumberously or vividly, according to his mood, but their vital life never died. His chin was too sensitively cast to belong rightly to any other than a woman—her hand went instinctively to hers, which was firm and rounded and decisive, a chin typical of the Ingraham family, her grandfather's chin feminized. And there her thought, all but traitorous, stopped; she would not go further.

From his abstracted gazing at the low bowl of roses which stood between them, he looked up at last to smile into her eyes, and the sight of that smile of his thrust another thought into her brain, to take the place of the one she had thrust aside. With what eternal youth was he blessed! He was so joyously young, so joyously young! She felt old as she looked at him, for she was desperately tired, now that her days of anxiety and nights of terror were ended, and her suspense was lifted, and she seemed to feel herself wilting before the radiance of his springing joy in life. If she could ever, in her life, feel the simple joy in living which he felt, be so free from wearying senses of responsibility, and yet fail so seldom in vital things, know herself to be simply one with Nature, and to be filled with happiness therefore instead of pain! Happiness was his creed—he had no other; as for her, she was beset by them all—the creeds made after civilization so-called began its deadly work, in which happiness was not to be looked for here, was only to be attained, perhaps, with nothing short of dogged striving, in some grim or enervating hereafter.

"You are so happy, Duane!" she breathed, the words springing to her lips without volition. "So happy!"

Regis smiled at her dreamily. "How could I not be! When I have you, and my 'Mary, Queen,' and Carruthers—and you, first and last, you!"

She was hopelessly morbid, she knew it, but even as she smiled back at him she wondered calmly—her calmness was growing to be the worst feature of these wonderings—if he could have ever said this same thing, years before, over another breakfast-table, to another woman—a woman who still lived. She was not filled with resentment which was ordinary. It was not that she resented the fact of the woman's continuing hold on life at all, but she was questioning, sometimes fiercely, sometimes with curling lips, the inner secrets of love. What was it worth, if it shifted from one object to another, lightly, leaving no scar behind—she could detect on Duane's soul no scar—if it, like life, were here today and gone tomorrow, blown as the wind listeth, springing up as the grass, fading as the flowers! A portion of her church's burial service flashed through her brain: "—fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay!"

All her feeling of these past two months crystallized suddenly into fierce protest against her own name serving unnecessarily to point any light jest on the fugacity of love. She followed overmastering impulse, and, rising from her chair, came round to Regis's side of the table, and laid her hand lightly on his arm.

"I wish that you wouldn't dedicate that book to me."

Regis looked up, astonished at the abrupt words. "Why not, Victoria, and why not? You said this same thing once before, the night on which I read it aloud to you and Carruthers. And I remember distinctly the reason, your only one, which you adduced; and my answer today is what it was that night—the stream can climb no higher than its source, my dearest."

She stood beside him, looking gravely down at him, with darkening eyes. "I mean it, from my soul," she murmured. "If only for this reason, that perhaps, some time, you will wish that you had not."

"I've never wished that yet," he answered gaily. "And I've dedicated a number of books, too, to people,

some of whom have gone utterly out of my life. But I've never grudged one of them nor wished one back, because each dedication has always been a payment, in the best coin I had to offer, for needful aid bestowed, for inspiration which at the time meant the thing of ultimate good for me, and one can never forget such gifts, Victoria, nor regret any attempt at payment. I am forever in your debt, my dearest; let me repay you partly, as best I can, show you that I do appreciate."

"Forever in my debt!" she breathed. Her brows drew together as she looked down into his face.

"Forever!" he repeated, lightly still. "I should be worse than all the traitors of all lands if I failed to own, forever, such gratitude for such aid."

He pushed back his chair as he spoke, and, once upon his feet, he slipped his arms about her.

"Could I ever be ingrate enough to regret giving Malcolm Carruthers my firstfruits, when they were his, whatever the future might thrust between us, to separate us! For what he meant to me then is still mine, still shows in what I am doing today, and shall do tomorrow; is, consciously or unconsciously, a part of me forever."

"Then to know you perfectly, as I have told you I must know you, I must know the people who have made you what you are!" She was hardly conscious of her words, only of her thought. But with the utterance her face crimsoned, though Regis did not see the burning flush.

"Well, you know most of them, one way or another," he said. "You asked me only a few weeks ago about poor old E. D. N. Poor old chap! you can't be jealous of the dead."

"No, no!" she uttered quickly, shrinking from the inevitable, supplementary thought to his careless words. But it was between them now, the memory of Beatrice; between them, as it had been countless times during these last two months. Invariably she could feel it coming; invariably she pushed it away from her, from them both, with frantic hands; and invari-

ably it crept insidiously about them, bringing the inevitable lull in their speech, the inevitable barrier.

His arms held her more loosely; they dropped at last, and he turned from her toward his work-room. But he looked back, and then he came over to her, and caught her again in his arms, strainingly.

"You know I love you, love you!" he murmured; it was his never-varying sentence of renewal of sympathy after such wraith-like separating. And her reply, "Yes, I *know!*" did not vary now. Usually the two sentences were all, but this morning, after a slight hesitation, he added quickly:

"It is the present which concerns us, you and me, and the future. The past, even my conscious past, what more is it than the past which all my dead and dusty ancestors have bequeathed to me? A part of me, true enough, but, good or bad, it is a part of what I am today, and because it is forever past, and there is no renewal possible, I take it all together, and say I am grateful for everything. Why not? For it has all made me Me, my own all-absorbing, marvelous Me!"

"Get to work, if you must, Duane, but be careful," Victoria said for sole response. She laughed as she said it, but the laugh hardly rang true, and back of the transient sparkle in her eyes there lurked the interrogation of a thousand unanswered questions and a pathetic plea for their answering. And then, like a flash of blinding light, a way out of her maze showed itself to her. She turned quickly away from Regis, in involuntary impulse to hide from him the thought which shrieked itself into her ears, and seemed to write itself in red across her forehead. Her very lips formed the words which might have betrayed her. She stood still, listening to Regis's steps as he went into his library; then, after several minutes, she went silently toward the stairway. Without willing it, in obedience to this overpowering, mad, all but bad impulse which gripped her, she began to ascend them. Half-way up Regis's voice stopped her.

"Are you going out this morning, Victoria?"

She stopped, and looked down into the hall below; she could see through into Regis's library, could just see his beautiful head bent low over his pile of manuscript. A bit of fatalism, born of and a part of this greater fatalistic impulse to which she had just surrendered, made her answer him as she did.

"Not if you want me for anything at all—anything, Duane."

She waited breathlessly for his reply; on it would hang her decision; rather it would be the active thing which would decide. He would wish to have her by him this morning, to play, of course; to play those wonderful things she had played for him during the months of this book's creation. She had not thought once this morning, since his announcement that he was to begin work again, of that part in his work which she must do, that part which was hers. Hardly conscious of her act, she began to retrace her steps, to descend the steps she had just ascended. In melodies and harmonies she must find peace; it was as if Regis had already answered her, and his voice, when it came at last, distant and thread-like from his deep abstraction, surprised her.

"No, no. Do go. I shall be gathering up threads all morning. It will be lonely for you, and I shall feel freer, dearest, with the house to myself. Go shopping, or calling, up to Jewel's—"

"I shall go," Victoria said quickly. She turned again, and ran blindly up the stairs, stumbling as she went, in a fever of haste, for, if she did not make wild haste, she was well aware that her physical weakness would prove the undoing of this full-born, unswerving, adamant resolve. She ran into her room, and began to dress with trembling hands, her eyes bright and eager, and her cheeks flushed to a feverish heat.

XI

AFTERWARD, when she had time to sit down and think it over, and when

the still watches of the night brought to mind certain psychic phenomena not ordinarily considered in the glaring light of a prosaic day. Mrs. Cort-Regis realized that, by all the seemingly variable yet invariably constant laws governing the action of her intuitive faculties, she should have been warned of what was to befall her on this morning in latter May. All the creepy premonitions which her common sense rejected and her deepest instincts cherished; all the vague nebula of memories so indistinct that any attempt to pin them down resulted in their frightened flight; all the vaguer sense that somewhere in the universe a seeking line had been cast into the void by some spirit groping for hers, and that deep was crying unto deep; all this indefinite unrest was with her from her first waking moment until her maid brought her, a little after ten o'clock, a card. As she raised herself lazily from her deep chair and took it in her fingers, all her cloudy disquiet precipitated one crystal certainty, and she read the name without shock, almost without surprise.

But she did hesitate a moment before giving the maid her orders; waited to cast one quick glance about her cool little nest up there, and she devoted the fraction of a second to weighing ways of action. There was this room here; on the other hand, there was the room below. She might ask Victoria Regis to come up, or she herself might go down; this room was made for womanly confidences; on the other hand, her drawing-room was comparatively neutral ground. All this went through her brain in swift waves, and while it passed she rose to her feet, glancing into her long mirror carelessly. She was in *négligée*, but it was artistic *négligée*, and it had the advantage of unstudied intimacy. It would bring the atmosphere of the boudoir into the formal coolness of the drawing-room, and thus was the small perplexity solved; it would be better for her to go to Victoria Regis, considering that Victoria Regis had come to her.

She went quickly downstairs, her

pale blue draperies trailing like filmy clouds behind her, touching, as she went, one straying bit of hair back into place. Her one quick glance into her mirror had shown her that one remediable thing; for the rest she had the good sense to leave artistic disarray alone. Her whiteness was no whiter for this coming ordeal, as was her clear rose red no deeper. She found time to be glad, as she went swiftly down the stairs, that the pale blue of this morning-gown she wore matched her eyes exactly, eyes which she always felt, in moments of cold-blooded analysis, such as the present moment was, were too pale a blue for her beauty to be of the highest type. But no one besides herself had ever been known to cavil at them, with their delicate, jet-black brows and heavy long lashes.

She first looked on Duane Regis's second wife through the broad doorway which led into her drawing-room from the hall. "A child!" she said instantly, and then gave her own cool estimate instant lie. No child stood ever, waiting, with such eyes, such mouth. "She is utterly beautiful!" Beatrice Cort-Regis said to herself. "And a mystic—and all the food I have to offer her is a drift of common sense and a deep appreciation of the humorous. Heaven help us both, and grant her power to smile and me a fair dozen tears to weep!"

She entered the room with the same light quickness, and advanced to meet the gray-clad girl who rose with a heaviness of motion pathetically alien to her slender physique.

"This is very good of you," Beatrice Cort-Regis said invitingly or briefly, cordially or coolly, alluringly or repellingly, according to the insight or predisposition of the runner who read. She did not offer her hand to her guest, because, with every second, she grew more uncertain of the pallid creature before her. She had thought a glance would solve the puzzle of friend or foe, but it did not, and, not fancying a possible repulse, she kept her cool, serene distance.

Victoria Regis did not speak at once,

but stood looking steadily into the face of the woman she had come to see. Her face was white when Mrs. Cort-Regis entered the room, but it grew whiter and whiter, until, as the silence lasted, Beatrice grew fearful lest a scene, after all, was to be the result of this so far unexplained call; a fainting fit; hysteria, perhaps—what did this child desire—what did she hope to gain—why, why, why had she come?

"I came," began the girl unsteadily, "to see you—to ask you to tell me—" Her voice died in her throat; in another second she turned away, and went quickly over to a window, where she stood with her back to her hostess, struggling for self-control.

For a moment Mrs. Cort-Regis stood silent, all but at a loss. If this child were about to cry, considering that she herself loathed tears intensely—"Heaven help us both!" she uttered to herself again, with heartfelt simplicity. But there were no tears, and it was just as Victoria turned back that Mrs. Cort-Regis went across to her.

"I shall tell you whatever I can—I shall tell you whatever you want to ask me," she corrected herself. For a look into the girl's eyes had given her faith. She pushed forward a chair. "Won't you sit down?" she urged gently. "Why should we stand! Let us sit down."

"Not until I tell you why I have come," Victoria replied quickly; her poise had returned and, in spite of her pallor, there was a faint, half-interested light in her eyes which Mrs. Cort-Regis caught and pondered over. "It is to ask you what I can find out nowhere else, what I can't ask my"—she flushed painfully—"what I can't ask Duane," she amended simply. "What no bookmen in the city can tell me—it is about 'The Court of Love,' which he wrote and dedicated to you, five years ago."

She lifted her gray-gloved hand as Mrs. Cort-Regis's lips parted for reply. "Not until I have told you why I have dared to come to ask you," she said. Unconsciously she dropped her coat

on a chair near her, and leaned lightly against the piano, looking like some fragile flower as she stood bravely facing the storm and cold of this other woman. "I owe it to you, to tell you that, so far as words can tell it; for there is too much which can't be put into words—which you must know without words, if this hour is to be anything but a mistake and a failure and a bitter memory."

She paused for a moment, and Beatrice Cort-Regis, after a long glance, felt a sensation of shame because of the resentment, involuntary though it was, which she had felt and all too plainly shown at a reference to what need not, after all, affect her so keenly. So Malcolm Carruthers had been right, after all, in his random guess; the trouble here lay in the matter of that tiny, long since written and all but forgotten phrase: "To Beatrice!" And yet the trouble was not jealousy; for this woman was no jealous wild woman. Her distress lay deeper than that vulgar emotion.

Victoria Regis began to speak again with almost painful slowness of utterance, and Mrs. Cort-Regis listened with an interest at once curiously detached and vitally personal.

"He has been as reserved in what he has said to me of those years of his life with which you are concerned as you, or I, could wish him to be—I don't need to tell you that. The simple outline he has told me—that was my right—and if you were any other sort of woman than the sort he has made me believe you are—he and my Cousin Jewel—I could not have come to you. But a few months ago I found, in a cabinet where he keeps his first copies of his books, the one book he never told me about, 'The Court of Love,' and I found that it is dedicated to you. That thing wouldn't have meant so much to me if it hadn't happened that that very day he brought me a card on which he had written the form of dedication for his book which is to be published this Fall—to me! It cast me into a storm of doubt and torment"—she was speaking now with

breathless rapidity—"and I have endured it for months, ever since I knew—doubts, not of him nor of his love for me, now, but doubts of Love. Of Life itself! If anyone had ever told me that I should seek this sort of speech with you, I should have laughed the idea to scorn; but something he said to me this morning made me come—wait, let me tell you what he said, while I have the words to tell you. He is beginning his last work on this book, and I, this morning, dared to ask him not to dedicate it to me—the gift had meant so much, and now it seems to mean so little—and he said this to me, and I am saying it to you—it is the reason why I am here: 'Each dedication has always been a payment in the best coin I had to offer, for aid bestowed, for inspiration which at the time meant the thing of ultimate good to me, and one can never forget such gifts nor regret any attempt at payment.' And, speaking of Malcolm Carruthers, 'What he meant to me then is still mine, still shows in what I am doing today, and shall do tomorrow; is, consciously or unconsciously, a part of me forever!'"

The melody of her voice rose and fell in the silent room. Beatrice stood opposite her, gazing intently at her guest, seeing, bit by bit, through what the girl said, all that she was leaving unsaid; all that part of deepest subtlety which speech could never touch. She caught bits of Victoria's personality, too, as the girl spoke breathlessly on, observed the beauty of her sensitive hands, the tremulous vibrations of her lips and chin, the indescribable loveliness of her eyes, the eyes of an idealist, an idealist who was not, however, a mere dreamer. She moved quite close to the girl, still not offering to touch her, but her voice was very gentle when she spoke.

"You aren't resentful—of that small thing I am to him yet? . . . The word is unfortunate. I beg your pardon."

Victoria's slender body had straightened swiftly. "If I were moved by that small a feeling, I should not have

left in me enough self-respect to come here to you, today—to talk to you in riddles, as I fear I've done. Unless you can catch at half my meaning I shall have made a sad botch of things in coming at all."

The childish tremor of her lips touched Mrs. Cort-Regis to almost petulant tenderness. She realized with unpleasantly painful self-reproach that she should have taken the helm of this lurching craft of conversation ten minutes before; this child had shown the bravery of a long race of heroes, in talking as she had done, unaided, and without marked show of sympathetic hearing.

Therefore Beatrice Cort-Regis leaned forward and caught the girl's wrists firmly in her strong hands.

"Now see here, my good child," she said briskly, frankly, good-humoredly, her words brusque yet vibrating with sincere kindliness, "since we are to talk together for a brief space, let us both make up our minds to this, that neither one of us 'resents' the other, and that neither one of us intends to say anything which is not most delicate and considerate and true—above all things, true! But let us face this thing also, courageously, that we are apt to find during this ensuing hour that the most casual remarks, the most ordinary words are apt to hold meanings other than the ones we intend, apparent only after we have said the words. So let us grant common sense and a certain recognition of good intention, each to the other, and with that granted let us talk together. You believe me, that I am really your friend, and his?"

"I know you are his friend," Victoria said simply. "He told me that himself, and Malcolm Carruthers has told me that, and Jewel. Of course, before I—after I—" She stopped abruptly, seeing an amused light in Mrs. Cort-Regis's eyes, and she added swiftly, almost sharply: "How can you take things so—lightly! Divorce is—horrible!"

Beatrice Cort-Regis pushed forward a chair for her strange guest. "Do sit down," she said cordially. "Please.

Yes, I am his friend, and I am yours, if you will let that remark sound as I mean it, without a trace of anything but sincerity in it. It has not been so many months since you were talked over here, beside this very fireplace, you and he, by four of his best friends, who were also friends of yours; on the day that your wedding cards reached town. And we all proved ourselves then, and since, your friends and his."

She allowed a slight pause to fall, and then she added, with the air of one picking up a stray conversational thread: "Divorce is horrible, you think. But how blessed, in that it makes possible sometimes the genuine marriages of spirit, soul, whatever you call the bond, which would otherwise be denied the unfortunate men and women who have done only a human thing, made mistakes. After all, marriage, viewed sensibly, is nothing more nor less than a contract between two people—or should be merely that, and no more."

"A contract!" Victoria repeated slowly.

"What else!" agreed Mrs. Cort-Regis lightly. "A relation entered into, to be dissolvable by mutual agreement of the parties to it—that will be the uniform divorce law when it comes, with suitable provision for children, of course, when there are children—and certain loopholes in case of wanton stubbornness on the part of one party to the contract, when just cause is proved. Do I talk like a lawyer's brief? Well, I thought it all out, my own solution of the vexing question, a few years ago, and I must say that if my marriage was not of the model type, my divorce was wrought out along thoroughly scientific and up-to-date grounds."

"I wish," said Victoria Regis, after a long moment, during which she looked steadily into the other woman's eyes, "that I could possibly laugh about it—even smile about it as you can and do. I've always taken life seriously—my sense of humor was submerged in my childhood, and it rises only now and then, above the gray expanse which life has always meant to me, until these

last few months. But it is sunk again, deep below the gray surface, and I cannot bring it up."

"But why not smile about it—even laugh!" questioned Mrs. Cort-Regis gently. "This taking of life seriously is well enough, so long as one doesn't take it too seriously; that is, when a mistake is made, why, stand by it, if it is of a sort to be remedied, as this one was! You've proved that," she added.

"Have I?" the girl murmured almost to herself.

Beatrice leaned forward and laid her hand impulsively on the girl's arm. "I am sure you are troubled with shadows, distressed with vain imaginings. My dear child—ah, I am past thirty and no stranger to the vagaries of Love—take the good the gods give, while they are of generous mind, and rejoice in it and be glad, as Duane is glad and full of joy, and don't let any thought of their past mistaken gifts to him mar your gladness—they don't disturb his, I know."

"That is it," said the girl swiftly. "I'm not questioning concrete things, nor personal things, in a sense. It is that abstract thing, Love, that more awful thing, Life, that I am breaking myself before and bruising myself against. That thing of his which I quoted to you . . . it brought all my distresses to a head . . . it drove me here . . . he drove me here, because of all mornings, he happened, this morning, not to want me near him. I must understand him better, know him better. I thought I stood on solid rock, and it is sand and shifting. And this chaos all came from that insignificant thing, dedication! He gave me his 'Mary, Queen,' for my own, and on the heels of that giving I found it merely something which he had once given to you! I am morbid over it. I tried to find copies of that book, 'The Court of Love' . . . to burn them, I suppose. I didn't know what I was going to do with them. I wanted to gather them all up—"

Mrs. Cort-Regis spoke swiftly, with ruthless interruption. "Would all of them, collected, lay the walking ghost?"

"Are you sure of that?" Her eyes were filled with eager questioning.

Victoria smiled gravely. "Are you laughing at me? No, I know you aren't, but I almost think you may. I am sure that some time I shall be able to laugh at myself for all this—but not now. We have talked all about and around things, and we haven't come directly to any point yet. You are the only one I can ask about that book, the only one who can tell me about that book, what it is, its history, when it was written and what it did for Duane. I read some of it. I didn't like . . . some of it. But I am very sure I am not able to judge it rightly. Will you tell me about it?"

Mrs. Cort-Regis sat silent for a brief moment; then she rose lightly to her feet.

"Will you follow me," she asked, "upstairs and still up, to my third-story store-room? There is something there that I want to show you, and I shall tell you there what you want to know. Will you come? Let your things lie here, till we come down again."

XII

SHE led the way up the two flights of stairs and down a narrow corridor to a small back room, stopping once at her own sitting-room, for a key, which she inserted in its sister door, and, with a slight smile and a charming gesture, she ushered Victoria into the room. It was dim and dusty, and Mrs. Cort-Regis uttered a faint cry as her guest brushed carelessly against a pile of ancient books. She caught up a linen cover from a chair which stood near, and turned it quickly over a packing-box in the middle of the room.

"Don't ruin that exquisite dress!" she said beseechingly. "That chair is no earthly good. Try sitting here. It will bring you close to what I brought you up to show you."

Victoria looked curiously about her. The room was an unfinished one, its walls still left in rough, gray plaster, and it

was a veritable store-room. Trunks and packing-boxes and odd pieces of furniture abounded; pictures stood dejectedly against the wall; shelves ranged against the sides of the room held boxes and misshapen bundles galore; discarded books and magazines were piled everywhere. She gathered her delicate skirts about her, at Mrs. Cort-Regis's imperious command, and watched that lady quietly as she bent over a solid, heavy packing-box which stood between them, twisting with strong hands at its top, which was but lightly nailed down. As the fastenings gave way, Beatrice cast down the loose boards, and dropped gracefully on the floor beside the box, sweeping away the flimsy paper overlaying its contents, disclosing thereby its top layer of thin gold-and-gray books: "The Court of Love."

"The Court of Love"—Victoria read the title over a dozen times on as many volumes before she raised astonished eyes to Beatrice.

"These are they!" uttered Mrs. Cort-Regis still lightly. "The entire edition of six hundred, lacking only two. Of the missing two one you have in your own possession; the other belongs to an old poetaster in town—I have his name; I think, perhaps, if you wanted it, you might be able to obtain it. Personally, I should be willing to try at least."

"But how do you," uttered Victoria slowly, "come to have them at all?"

"You are the second person who is to know that interesting fact. You would be the first if Malcolm Caruthers had not clawed the silly story out of me a little while ago. After I have told you, the story is yours, to do with as you will. But I feel sure that you will agree with me and Malcolm, that nothing is to be gained by widening the circle of those who know."

She leaned forward, her knees drawn up against the box which held the books, her lovely hands resting lightly on one of the volumes. She began to talk, lightly, as she had spoken almost always in this morning's talk, feeling

her way skilfully with the utmost tact. How much this child-like woman sitting before her could stand of a story which concerned them both so intimately, she could not know at first. But Victoria Regis sat silent, stirlless, watching with unswerving eyes the face of the woman raconteur, and, after many moments of surface speech Beatrice Cort-Regis touched, little by little, upon things vital and more vital, until she sounded depths at last which she would have accounted unfathomable until this hour, and the story of "The Court of Love" and its pathetic fate became a light side issue, instead of the kernel of the story. That Victoria did not comment once during the hour did not matter, either to her or to Beatrice, for mutual sympathy was strong and throbbing from the beginning. But when Beatrice stopped, with her final period, which closed a cross reference to the gray-and-gold book she held, Victoria leaned over and, for the first time, touched Mrs. Cort-Regis's hand.

"That you should have done it so, for him!" she breathed. "It was a beautiful thing to do; it was more than wifely—it was maternal!"

"There you have it," said Beatrice. "I haven't said the word, but you have put your finger on the core of the difficulty between us, Duane and me; you have understood. He brought out all that side of me, which isn't too much, I grant you that—a reason perhaps why I resented so greatly the change in my feeling for him. But what was there he brought out, all to be showered upon himself. It satisfied him almost always. And I—I wanted a lover always, not a dependent child! Oh, I am not speaking one word against him—you believe that—but I am telling you the vital truth which you may like to think of in the years to come. Because there is one type of love which can never inspire jealousy of any sort, and that love is maternal love. And the longer I stayed under his roof, and the more intimately I grew to know him, the more maternal I grew to feel toward him—and that sort of love

didn't content me—there is the innermost secret of the whole trouble. He doesn't know it; he couldn't understand it if he did; and there's no need that he ever should. It was enough for him to realize, as keenly as I realized it, the basic fact that we could not live together happily, that we grated sorely on each other. But he never solved the reason, that I was never intended to live my life unmastered by man. I was made to be beaten with whips, to lie crouching at the feet of my master—" she broke off with a light laugh. "You know what I mean—you must know. And Duane—the emotion he most potently appeals to in woman is her tenderness."

Victoria's eyes softened into radiant beauty. "Yes," she breathed.

Beatrice looked keenly at her. "You are ideal, too," she said abruptly. "*Une sensitive* like he himself. Well, it is a fitting marriage; each of you can understand the other."

"No," said the girl sharply. "You know him better than that. He can't ever know, must not ever know, that I am like him, so vitally like him. He needs to be spared the worry of knowing it. He is so gifted, so—"

She stopped abruptly, a slow flush flaming over her pale cheeks beneath Beatrice's eager, light-filled eyes.

"What do I say!" cried the older woman. "He brings it out in all women; men of his type always appeal so, until at last, to a wife, he becomes less her husband than her best beloved child—"

She stopped in her eager speech, halted abruptly by the look on the girl's face, a look of bitter pain.

"Face it!" she said at last in a hushed voice. "You see too much not to face it all. And you can dare to face it, for you will always hold that when one must choose between one's own highest good and the great good of some other one, one's self must go to the wall. I—well, I do not believe it. I never did, I never could, and I should have made a sadder mess of things than I did if I had ever tried to act on it. Besides, it was not

Duane's highest good which was concerned. You have that in your hands, I am utterly certain of that. Our love was young and unreasoning and full of self-indulgence and mutual selfishness. This marriage is founded on something infinitely higher; there is the great thing for you to hold, the great difference between us which will spell happiness in this for you, where it spelled wreckage for me. And here is another. Duane is a curious mixture of idealism and materialism, really, but he adores the Ideal, and he loathes the Material. I—I am a materialist of the deepest Tyrian purple. I don't believe in the dual nature of man or of nature, and when I have any sort of emotion which brings the possibility that I may be mistaken before me, I want to hide that nasty little emotion, whatever it is, bury it deep, run away from it, and lure any observers into paths where they can never walk across its grave. I can't help it. I was born that way—and Duane is precisely the opposite. He revels in emotions and dissections of them, and he can't help that, any more than I can break through my own natural limitations. But you, you are an idealist of the first water, and you can—"

"I was!" broke in Victoria Regis harshly. "I was nothing but a mystic. But do you dare believe that if I were nothing but that now, that I could be here, talking so to you across this—coffin!" Her hand dropped heavily on the box of books which lay between them.

Mrs. Cort-Regis started at her curiously, but she did not speak at once. This girl had surprised her infinitely, had surprised her beyond speech, and she waited for more light.

"I think," Victoria said at last, slowly, "that it must take a man of no sentiment to keep a woman mystical. Because he has no hidden desires which go slipping out into the unknown, is satisfied with present possession, and so doesn't interfere one way or another with all the cobwebby idealisms which a woman may weave about him, doesn't interfere one way or another

with her dreaming." She laughed shortly. "He is the figurehead for them all; it takes a stolid man of that type not to interfere with dreamings and idealizings. But when a woman will not face the truth of things when she is married to a man of sentiment with the passion for idealization—"

"The habit, the habit!" broke in Beatrice swiftly. "Don't mistake it. It is the habit of, rather than the passion for—"

Victoria looked at her keenly. "I don't know whether you are right there or not," she said slowly. "Perhaps you are. It makes a difference—accounts for—"

The pause lengthened into moments before Beatrice ended it. "And what each of us has ever meant to him still shows in what he is doing today, and shall do tomorrow, and is, consciously or unconsciously, a part of him forever! Yes, that is a part of the artist nature, and he is true to his type; for his type feeds on the souls of others and takes freely of what it needs for self-nourishment regardless. I understood, but I couldn't endure it, because my love was not great enough. But yours is mighty to save yourself and to cherish him—all the mightier because your eyes, for one hour, have beheld Truth, a sight well to look upon, once in a lifetime."

She paused a moment, then, with an entire change of manner and of subjects: "When shall I send these books to you?"

Victoria started in her surprise. "To me!"

"They are yours, if you want them. Ah, my dear, you would better take them; they've been only the symbol of this unrest, but they do symbolize it all, and here they are, all together, yours, belonging to no one in the world who can ever question identities!"

Victoria lifted a copy of the book, and gently turned its leaves. Beatrice leaned over and read with her for a brief page's space, and then she herself shut the book.

"It symbolizes more than your unrest and its causes; held up against

Duane's 'Mary, Queen,' it will epitomize the difference in these two loves, the sort of love he bore me and the sort he gives to you, a love which you may hold all your life long, if you are strong enough to be content to love him as you might the child of your heart; the sort of love I was not high enough to give him, and whose lack he felt, until we faced the end."

"Yet you were friends," Victoria murmured. "Until I——"

Mrs. Cort-Regis smiled slightly. "It wasn't you. It is marriage itself, exacting marriage—and Duane. You are his own now. And if his marriage had not ended it, my own would have, eventually."

"Your marriage——"

Victoria hushed further speech, but she could not hide the light in her eyes.

"I beg your pardon," she murmured.

"My pardon! But why?" asked Beatrice. "I may marry again—you know—perhaps. Not that I think it likely. I don't like marriage. It is too constraining. But perhaps I might, in a moment of madness or too great gladness——"

"I wish that you——"

"Would?" Mrs. Cort-Regis murmured inquiringly; she laughed her low, amused laugh at the sight of Victoria's rich flush. "How unorthodox! You really mean it—why? Because you feel that marriage is so happy a state——" She broke off in her idle words, and, leaning forward, caught the younger woman's wrists in a hard grip. "What do you mean? Would it possibly make you happier, more secure in your happiness? Is it possible that you really mean that?"

She almost flung Victoria's hands back into her lap after her impetuous questions, and she sat back, staring down at the book which lay between them. Suddenly she looked up.

"Did you really mean that?" she asked again.

Victoria looked troubled; then her brow cleared and she laughed softly. "I didn't mean to scream it out, nor to put it into italics," she said. "And hearing the screams, and reading the

italicized screams, I think that I—did not mean it!"

The older woman laughed irrepressibly. "Cultivate it, that latent sense of humor of yours," she advised. She dropped her chin into her hand. "I can see how it would help," she mused. "I never looked on my possible marriage in just such a light before. Yet, if I give myself in marriage again, will you like it—will you like it!"

"I am going to send you these books this afternoon," she added briskly. "No, no—they are yours; my claim on them is gone forever. I shall not reserve even one copy for my own. No, I sha'n't. And if I can find among my papers the address I once had of that queer old man who bought the only copy of them which sold, I shall buy it back from him and send it to you. My dear, I know that you are not a child. I think you are a wise woman and a brave one, but when it is possible to chloroform howling dogs so simply, why not give them their fill of peaceful sleep! All of these books will be in your possession by this afternoon, and you can make of them ashes or torn refuse, as you will."

"But this afternoon!" hesitated Victoria. "Duane is sure to be at home. He has no idea that I have come here, and I dare say I shall never tell him."

"But he *never* is interested in letters or packages," interposed Mrs. Cort-Regis briskly. "He *always* has to have his letters opened for him, and *never*——"

She bit her lips in her vexation; it was too raw a blunder. But Victoria's laugh peeled out.

"I shall leave the time and method in your hands," she said graciously, and rose to her feet. "Do you know," she confessed, half-shyly, wholly charmingly, "I think it might not be a difficult matter for us to be—friends."

Beatrice laughed in her turn. "After all, sages and philosophers to the contrary, and all the psychologists to boot, it is the men who make the trouble in this world and who do the quibbling! Look you, we two might be friends, in

spite of what might be called the insurmountable obstacle—haven't we all but proved it!—if it were not for the man in the case, whose feelings would revolt, I do assure you, not at being good friends with each of us separately, but in acknowledging us to be friends. And if I should ever tempt fate again and be married—to the only man I should ever dare to marry—there would be two narrow, bigoted men in this complicated case!"

They left the room a moment later, without further words, and they said but little on their way downstairs, nor in the hall. But in the drawing-room, Victoria, picking up her coat and handbag, lingered long enough to make the fleeting meeting of their lips a natural and spontaneous thing. That ended the oddest, most emotional hour which had come into Mrs. Cort-Regis's bystander's life for some years, for Victoria went away with no other word. Her hostess watched her departure, and then started quickly for her upper sanctuary, mopping her eyes briskly.

"What a sentimental time! And what a fool I am!" she breathed disgustedly.

XIII

MRS. CORT-REGIS'S fire had never shone with brighter flaming than it did that same evening, a cool one in May, with a tang in the air like frosty October; and her eyes had never shone bluer beneath their jetty lashes than they did while she sat waiting—really waiting with feverish expectancy—for the tiny echo of her door-bell's ringing. Her small drawing-room was in immaculate order, yet she cast furtive glances about it from time to time, and on several occasions rose to straighten books and music and to shift chairs. Once she deliberately lifted a book lying forgotten on a table, and flung it deep into a pile of cushions; it happened to be a book which Malcolm Carruthers detested for its insincerity, and which she rejoiced in for its provocative brilliancy.

The tinkle of the bell came to her ears at last, and at its first faint sound all her signs of inward perturbation and feverishness and restless expectancy vanished; her limbs straightened into their wonted repose, and her eyes, beneath their long, thick lashes, grew sleepy and lazy and alluringly indifferent.

She did not rise as her guest entered the room, but she stretched out a languid hand to him, and allowed it to linger in his warm grasp.

"Are you late or early, Malcolm?" she asked.

Carruthers smiled slightly. "The answer is relative, and you are the only person who knows the answer here."

"Most clever gentleman!" she rejoined. "Sit down; not that chair—this one here. You are late, Malcolm, exceeding late. There you have it, the absolute truth, based on the relative scales which I hold!"

Carruthers seated himself opposite her, looking on her with disconcerting steadiness.

"You are one quiver of excitement," he announced calmly. "Out with it, woman, the thing you have to tell me; otherwise you will break into a thousand pieces—or some pagan tarantella."

"Malcolm, Malcolm!" she breathed ecstatically. "I've been teaching another woman to say 'More was lost at Mohacs Field!'"

"God help the woman!" muttered Carruthers grumpily. "Who was she?"

She uttered Victoria's name and lay back in her chair to laugh long and softly at Carruthers's violent start and surprised outcry.

"Not here!" he said, after a moment of confused cogitation.

"Dear Malcolm, would I go—there! And since we did not know each other by sight before this morning, there was no possibility of any indulgence in casual street meetings."

"It was true then, at least," he remarked, with the manner of a much blinded man, blessed with the sight of one tiny streak of light. "She did find that book, and had to see you."

"As to that, we saw each other here, first in these selfsame chairs; and then—guess where, Malcolm—upstairs, up two flights, in my store-room, sitting opposite each other, with Duane's 'Court of Love' between us, five hundred and ninety-eight strong! It was so funny and I could not laugh, nor even feel like it for a time, because, for her, there was at first no other field more bloody!"

"How did she compass it, the fundamental act of coming to you?" demanded Carruthers. "How did she do it?"

"It was her fight for life, Malcolm. We are all brave beings, when it comes to making our fight for life. For life is love and love is life with her, and she was fighting for love's honor. She could not reconcile it, the possibility of loving here today and there tomorrow, to say nothing of all the yesterdays—she is one of those whose one surrender makes her captive forever, either to reality or to wraith. You told me once all that Duane said to her that night about her part in 'Mary, Queen.' Well, there is 'The Court of Love' with its 'To Beatrice'!—something that is on earth; that exists; to haunt her waking hours and her dreams! And the long and short of it—"

"I see," uttered Carruthers slowly, as the pause lengthened, and, to do him full justice, he did. "But I should never have believed it possible, if it hadn't happened."

"A doubting Thomas I knew you would be," said his friend gaily, "and I took base advantage of one thing she said of you early in our talk, to ask her leave to repeat it. She granted it, and I feel free to talk of this oddest experience of my life."

"I took her upstairs and showed her all those pathetic copies, the whole box full," she added finally. "I told her that there lay the five hundred and ninety-eight; that she held secure the five hundred and ninety-ninth; that I knew where I could, in all probability, get the six hundredth. I sent them to her this afternoon, the quota of unsold copies. Tomorrow I am to go mean-

dering down in the byways and ancient highways of this town, seeking after one Hiram Bedford, who was the purchaser of the solitary copy which sold, and after I have cajoled him into letting me take it away with me, I shall send it to her, and my task will be done."

She stopped so abruptly that Carruthers looked up curiously, to surprise a flush upon her cheek.

"You are suppressing an important fact," he asserted calmly. "There yet remains the greatest thing."

She laughed a little and eyed him oddly. "You are entirely right."

"Then let me know the worst."

"You said once that she is wholly ideal," Beatrice said suddenly, sweeping his insistence ruthlessly away. "She isn't, Malcolm. She took to the Slavonic doctrine of relative woe like a duck, a darling little duck. No thoroughgoing, mystical idealist can do that. She surprised me in several ways. But it is precisely what I've thought, what I said to her, in part; the sort of love which women who love Duane, must feel for him, is of the maternal type, though most women, after the first year or so of marriage, drop into that state of mind, more or less unconsciously, toward almost every husband. She sees what her love is drifting into, what it must become, and it hurts; but she's a plucky woman, and she is facing it heroically. The one thing which she found unendurable, the thing which drove her here to me, was the fear that Duane might find, somewhere else, the more than perfect love. No, it was not so personal; it was questionings on the evanescence of love, the mocking ironies of human life upon this earth. But she will succeed where I failed; she will make him happy, because she is idealist enough yet—having the passion therefor, to cling with the grip of death to what the wise ancients called 'Ideas'; the Idea of Love, for instance, the image of what it should be, if this earth were heaven, and never is, because this earth is—Earth!"

Her voice fell, tone by tone, until her

words were become hardly more than thoughts breathed aloud. Carruthers leaned forward, watching her face closely in the dim light, silent and waiting.

"And in making him happy she will make herself blessed," the woman continued slowly. "It was that fierce George Eliot—or was it grim old Carlyle?—no matter, each of them thought it—who observed that there was one thing higher than happiness—blessedness. Well, she is enough a mystic to find her best happiness in blessedness— which to me is only euphony for slow martyrdom; only she will weigh her martyrdom against Mohacs Field— thanks to me and this morning's talk— and she will see that many, many martyrdoms are bloodier. And by-and-bye, who knows, she will become, through many stages and by steps we wot not of, a happy looker-on at life, instead of a pain-racked partaker thereof. She will grow into an odd union of fervid idealism and rabid materialism, but she will work out her salvation apart from him, and she will make him happy—oh, yes, she will make him happy."

"After all, what are you bewailing for her? Merely the vital process of adjustment, which every woman, whether she owns to it or not, must live through, more or less by herself, before marriage can be perfected."

Mrs. Cort-Regis looked at him through sleepy lids, half-contemptuously. "Oh, wise, wise man!" she breathed. "You euphonize, too; looking on ideals crashing into dust is 'the vital process of adjustment'; watching their dust blow lightly to the four winds is 'the perfecting of marriage'! Well, call it that; it should make anyone happier in mind to call it that."

"If she can call it that," said Carruthers, "and she can, why should you or I seek to give it other names, perhaps less true? Because a euphonistic tongue makes for happiness; and a spade sometimes is not a spade by any manner of means—"

"But a flower-wreathed support for wistaria and sweet honeysuckle—only

the handle cannot reach so high as the vines do climb," she uttered. "Enough then; spade is eliminated from my vocabulary from this moment; and when the flowering vines begin to droop of their own fair weight, we shall nail scantlings to the rude implement, and call the stark and staring thing a means to a beautiful end."

She laughed her light laugh, with which she was accustomed to dismiss her glancing cynicisms; but her face belied her laughter and her voice. It was pale and her lips were smileless.

"But this greatest service which you have yet to render her?" Carruthers persisted keenly. "I can see that your talking with her has helped in all ways. Didn't I say it, months ago, that it would be the best thing possible if she would but come to you—but the greatest service?"

Mrs. Cort-Regis moved restlessly. "Like the rest of you—you and Jewel, and Duane, too, for the matter of that—she sees that I am better out of the way," she said, an odd pathos vibrating in her voice. "I have served my time of service in Duane's life, have brought him safely through his teething period, his early fevers, epitomized in 'The Court of Love'—therefore, to the dust heap, I!"

"But her definite solution?" Carruthers's voice was level, yet it was big with sternly controlled feeling; he waited many minutes, until her silence, too long drawn out, answered him.

He rose to his feet at last and drew her to hers. "Suicide would cloud all our lives; therefore your mission to her and him must be fulfilled in a less sensational way," he said curtly. He stood, looking down at her dark head, bent so low he could not see her face, but his eyes lighted as he felt her hands trembling in his.

"I dare to believe," he added quietly, "that for any other man on earth you could have answered that question, unafraid of what might be precipitated thereby. But your silence has not saved you, nor would speech have spared you this moment. For the

hour has struck, the hour I have waited for, for months and months and months, the hour in which you were to know fear of me!"

"Fear of you!" she murmured, as he laughed.

"We shall call it by its ugly name but this once," he told her. "For this once the spade is a spade and nothing more. But after this one utterance, it becomes Love, forever more!"

She caught his hand an hour later as he bent above her to say good night.

"My dust heap, marriage!" she murmured. "Even if I didn't—care, it would be the best solution."

"You are philanthropic to a fault," said Carruthers somewhat grimly. "It is your life with which you are concerned now, its happiest solution, and its happiest solution means entire separation from its past."

"But separation!" murmured she doubtfully. "Need it be! You know what Duane was, how naturally he came here, and I went there, after the divorce. And *she* said, only today——"

"My wife is mine own!" said Carruthers grimly. "Mine own! Make up your mind to that, Beatrice!"

She laughed her low, tantalizing laugh. "That is precisely what I said—the oddity of it—that *if* I choose to be married again, there would be two narrow bigots in this complicated case."

"Narrow bigots!" ejaculated Carruthers. "So that is your name for us, you super-civilized woman! We sha'n't quarrel, Regis and I, since each of us has the woman he loves for his wife. But, on the other hand, we sha'n't force complications. My God in heaven, what do you want of any but the simplest code, you with your complexities and involutions?"

"To speak once more in the Spadian tongue, a man's wife is his wife!"

"Mine is mine own!" Carruthers repeated again. His fiancée laughed a little.

"I've always said that a man must talk this way, to inspire my deepest respect, Malcolm. And you—talk—

superbly. You almost make me think you mean it all."

Carruthers went into the hall for his coat and hat, and with them he came back to where she still sat, before the fire.

"There is to be more than talk to this," he said. "I have forgotten to tell you this thing, which I came down tonight to tell you, that I must go over to London next week, and that you were going with me. It can't be an extended wedding trip, but it can be a delightful one. Hush, hush—we sha'n't spoil this betrothal night with argument. But the boat sails a week from Saturday, at ten o'clock. That is the only fact worth discussing, and it is settled. The minor plans are in your hands."

"I am not sure that I shall like this, continued into the years," murmured Mrs. Cort-Regis to herself, alone over her fire, as she listened to the twelve strokes of midnight chimed out in the hall. "But there is this, of course, that it won't be. It will work him too hard to keep it up. But he is just keen enough to know that it is the only way, now! And I shall always know that he can compel me to do the right thing when I am determined to do the wrong one—if he cares enough about it. His indifference to most things is the consoling thought. Most of my vagaries he will consider beneath him. And I have craved an anchor all my days. Am I to be fool enough now to cast it away?"

She slipped lightly to her feet, her forehead wrinkled in lines of deepest thought.

"Everyone is wearing gray," she mused. "That dull blue will make an ideal traveling-suit, besides being immensely becoming—and different. Thank heaven, I shall have almost nothing to do in the way of clothes! One week from Saturday!"

XIV

ON the most beautiful June morning of the year mail was lying on the break-

fast-table when Regis and Victoria came down to it; properly sorted, according to Gerard's punctilious custom. Regis picked up his paper as he sat down, ignoring his pile of letters, and glanced through its first page rapidly.

"Wedding cards!" announced Victoria, as she touched the top letter of the half-dozen beside her plate. "Whose do you think?" Her quick fingers paused in their sorting, and she compared another envelope's address to her, with the address to them jointly, on the envelope which spelled of itself some bridal announcement.

And at the bottom of her pile lay a thin, oblong package, addressed by the same hand which had addressed the top envelope.

She threw her napkin quickly over the last two of the three, and handed the first envelope across to her husband. Its handwriting told her nothing, and the thick, creamy envelope told her nothing, but the sight of the second letter, addressed to her personally, in the same hand, had given her an odd start, and the thin, flat package beneath them all—it was a book—she knew it instantly for the book which Beatrice Cort-Regis had promised her—taken all in all she could not open the letter addressed to "Mr. and Mrs. Duane Regis."

"Open it, Duane," she said quietly.

Regis reached out a lazy hand for it, still reading his paper, and she sat across from him, waiting breathlessly until he should lay the sheet aside. He ran his eyes down one column and half-way down another before he laid the paper aside and turned his attention to the envelope which he held. His face changed quickly as he looked on the bold superscription, and a slight frown gathered on his forehead.

"Mr. and Mrs.!" he muttered, as he ripped it open.

She still watched him breathlessly as he took the thick, engraved sheet from its second envelope; she was certain it was news of Beatrice Cort-Regis, and she found herself wondering, on her own account, at the including of

her own name in the address. It was a time when she should neither be ignored nor included—a mistake would be made either way. She expected that Duane would be slightly surprised, but she was entirely unprepared for his amazed exclamation, quickly suppressed but unmistakable, as he read the engraved lines. She forced herself to sit quietly, watching him as he re-read them, his left hand passing rapidly across his forehead, according to his characteristic gesture when he was deeply engrossed. He looked over to her at last, the frown still on his face.

"The other party to this transaction explains the placing of your name on the envelope. It seemed bad taste at first—I owe her an apology for that injustice," he said briefly. He handed her the announcement, and she glanced at it only to raise eyes equally amazed to his.

"Not Malcolm Carruthers!" she cried.

"I suppose I should have known it," Regis said, after a pause filled with uncertainties for them both. "Looking back, I can see unmistakable signs, even now, of this thing. But it has come as a surprise. I can't get hold of it at all yet, this loss of Malcolm."

She crushed back the quick protest on her lips, and they finished breakfast in silence. Contrary to his usual custom, Regis read his paper absently; only once did he break the stillness between them, to say:

"They sail today, for Liverpool."

When breakfast was ended he rose abruptly. "I shall be busy all morning, dearest," he told her briefly. "This afternoon perhaps we might get into the country somewhere."

She watched him go into the library and saw the door close after him. Then she took her own unread letters and her flat, thin package, and went upstairs to her own room and shut herself within it. She laid her other letters aside, and sat, with the one letter which mattered, and the package, unopened in her lap, for many minutes. At last she cut the wrapping of the

book—it was the book indeed, the six hundredth copy of the poems which Beatrice Cort-Regis had published! She laid it gently down, and turned, at last, to the letter which was hers. It was like the woman to send it openly, boldly, even though she knew Duane's carelessness so well.

It began abruptly:

I should like to address you by your given name, but failing that, I shall call you nothing. I am sending you, in this same mail, the last copy of the entire issue of "The Court of Love." Let it, I beg, symbolize the here-all and the end-all of the incident which ought never to trouble you again. And I am sending, too, to you and to Duane, the announcement of that which shuts me out forever from your lives. I made up my reckless mind to try marriage once again. Your words started me on a dangerous train of thought, and the man seized the moment. He is the only man I could ever marry, but I wish, for all our sakes, that he were a stranger to you and Duane, and, above all things, that he were not Duane's best friend. Yet he compelled me, and I am his wife, even as I write you these lines.

I think that you and I, left to ourselves, might be friends, but I know that we cannot be, so let us face the condition as courageously as we faced theory and wraith a few days ago. This marriage of mine ought not to interfere with the foundations of Duane's and Malcolm's friendship, but it will interfere sadly with the outward expression of it which has up to now been so free. I am to blame for that cessation, I presume. On the other hand, your loss is also your gain. You may have lost Malcolm—in a certain sense you have; but I am out of your path forever. See—it is all expressed in this first signing of my new name, signed for you in all faithfulness,

BEATRICE CARRUTHERS.

Victoria slipped the letter, twice read, into the book lying by her, the thin gray-and-gold volume which she had first seen that rainy afternoon, three months before, of which Regis had never spoken to her, nor ever would, of that she felt assured. The others lay in a closet, awaiting final disposition; they had come on the afternoon of the day she had fled to Beatrice Cort-Regis's home, and she was decided on their utter consuming by flame. Burned or unburned, they troubled her no longer, but Duane must never know, must never chance to find them—even now she crushed down a yearning for

confession; he must never know. He could never understand all the inexpressible motives which drove her to Beatrice that morning, and above all things, he must never learn of that exquisite deceit which made him the author of this published book. That was Beatrice's secret forever; shared generously with her, indeed, but Beatrice's forever. And its burden was her own slender punishment. She had no other secrets from her husband.

She rose at last, and moved about her room, straightening its slight confusion into beautiful order. Into a desk which held her most private letters and dearest treasures she slipped the six hundredth copy of "The Court of Love," with Beatrice Carruthers's letter hidden safe within. She found that she was cherishing this volume with tenderest feeling; that she could not destroy it; that it must be hers forever. Even if Duane found it, through her sudden death—he would find it in no other way—the letter within its pages would explain everything. She might safely hold it for her own.

And Duane! If she saw him more truly, and saw the limitations of his nature which made his greatness, she saw them only to love him more tenderly. It was the future she had dreaded because of the past; but, having faced the past with clear eyes, the future was shorn of its terrors. She must shield, instead of being shielded, but in return she had a beautiful adoration for reward; and if Duane was to lean on her, accepting the gift of her life, there was this more than compensation, that her life, poured all hot and quivering into the casting mould of Love, in its recasting had been made one with his forever. This thing she *knew*.

She went down to the music-room at last, and threw open the piano, and began to play, softly at first, that she might not startle him, working so close beside her, yet fearlessly, because her music always soothed and delighted him; snatches from the Preludes and the Nocturnes and Ballades and the rest which, linked together and read by

cryptic key, were the story of her love and life. And at last, the door of Regis's library opened, and he came out to her.

"We shall miss Malcolm," he said briefly, as he stood beside her, and she knew he meant the words to stand for full expression of his depression. The impulsive question she had crushed back that morning swept from her lips.

"Need we—miss him?" she asked quickly. "You are not to think of me, now, Duane—for there is no need."

"It is impossible," said Regis sharply. "Impossible—the old freedom, I mean, though he will always be our friend, and we, his."

"And hers, Duane," Victoria breathed.

Regis looked into her eyes as she sat there, her fingers slipping lightly over the keys, making music in veriest snatchings of melodies.

"You have never before spoken, voluntarily, of her," he said. "Has this changed things, my dearest?"

"It has made you mine, and it has made me yours, forever," she told him.

He stood beside her for another

moment, sunk in thought; then he shook his head. "It is impossible!" he murmured, a repetition of another thought.

She played gently on, smiling, unseen of him, over certain words of this woman, said to her at parting, ten days before, words which had foretold these words of his. After all, it was, no doubt, "impossible."

But Regis still stood beside her, his forehead clouded.

"Victoria," he said abruptly, "twice you have asked me to dedicate this book to someone else. It is all but ready for that final thing. If you say that to me a third time I shall—not dedicate it to you; I shall fling it out, a gift to no one, because there is no one else. If you have your own secret reason, I shall not probe for it, but I shall not ride over it——"

She sprang to her feet, with tears and laughter struggling in her voice and in her eyes.

"Give it to me, give it to me!" she cried. "It is mine, by every right. You shall give it to no other one, not even to the great world general. It is mine; it is mine!"



LYRIC AT DAWN

By Arthur Upson

I DREAMT that out of dawn and dark
Your soul and mine were born,
And mine was like a flaming spark,
And yours was like the morn.

To mine your spirit from of old
Had risen with its love,
As yearns the morning to enfold
The star she glows above.

But always fails that sinking star
As dawn mounts up the sky,
For they were made to come from far,
To greet—and say good-bye.

THE RAINSHOES OF MONSEIGNEUR

By G. F. Burnley

IT was an evening of mid-September. Monseigneur Vallière, Cardinal Archbishop of Touraine, after an absence of nearly fifty years, had come to spend a few weeks with his sister in her tiny cottage just beyond the great domain surrounding the chateau where they had been born and which he and she, the last of their race, had cheerfully relinquished into the hands of strangers at the call which bade them sell all they had and give to the poor.

He sat at the open window and read his evening office as he sipped his cup of chocolate. From time to time an inquiring bee buzzed in on an exploring expedition, and now and then a fly settled on his book, the Autumn volume of the Breviary. At intervals a black-bird trilled from somewhere out of sight. Monseigneur's chair was placed at an angle with the window so that by turning his head he could look into the tiny garden, broad as my handkerchief, and gay as a Shiraz rug, or into the yet tinier apartment with its low book-cases filled with a few sumptuously bound volumes of devotion, and its two jewels of art, Andrea del Sarto's little panel of the Adoration glowing with amethyst and scarlet, and Bouguereau's great "Harvest"—a painting fit for an emperor—which seemed to let a flood of sunlight into the room. These were the only relics of monseigneur's great fortune. The poor of Tours had had all the rest at the time of the great strike, when ten thousand mouths had fed at the archbishop's table through seven long Winter months.

Mademoiselle Yvonne, his sister, softly entered and came and stood at the cardinal's elbow. She was silent

for a moment; then she turned her head and called through the open door:

"Babette, bring monseigneur's rainshoes."

Her clear voice penetrated to the little kitchen where Babette bustled among her shining crockery.

Monseigneur looked earnestly into the garden.

"But Yvonne," he remonstrated gently, "I shall not need them. It has scarcely rained through the day."

Of course it was as though he had not spoken. From some inner region came a sound of quick steps, and Babette appeared bringing the rainshoes.

Then Mademoiselle Yvonne continued: "Yesterday, while you were visiting the cobbler's wife, Madame de Vrou called and left her cards. She has a party at the chateau to celebrate the betrothal of her daughter. You should go and offer our congratulations."

For some moments monseigneur did not answer, but sat in a reverie under the clear gaze of his sister. At last he spoke, a little doubtfully.

"At once?" he said. "So soon?"

"But surely," said Mademoiselle Yvonne with decision, "in days gone by they were our oldest friends. It is expected of you."

"And monseigneur must not stay to dine," said Babette, "for the night air at this season is bad for his chest."

"Also you must wear the rainshoes," continued Mademoiselle Yvonne, "and do not tread on the damp grass."

The prelate saw that resistance was in vain. He exchanged the thin shoes with the silver buckles which he wore in the house for the stouter ones made by the village shoemaker. He took

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He stood beside her for another

moment, sunk in thought; then he shook his head. "It is impossible!" he murmured, a repetition of another thought.

She played gently on, smiling, unseen of him, over certain words of this woman, said to her at parting, ten days before, words which had foretold these words of his. After all, it was, no doubt, "impossible."

But Regis still stood beside her, his forehead clouded.

"Victoria," he said abruptly, "twice you have asked me to dedicate this book to someone else. It is all but ready for that final thing. If you say that to me a third time I shall—not dedicate it to you; I shall fling it out, a gift to no one, because there is no one else. If you have your own secret reason, I shall not probe for it, but I shall not ride over it——"

She sprang to her feet, with tears and laughter struggling in her voice and in her eyes.

"Give it to me, give it to me!" she cried. "It is mine, by every right. You shall give it to no other one, not even to the great world general. It is mine; it is mine!"



LYRIC AT DAWN

By Arthur Upson

I DREAMT that out of dawn and dark
Your soul and mine were born,
And mine was like a flaming spark,
And yours was like the morn.

To mine your spirit from of old
Had risen with its love,
As yearns the morning to enfold
The star she glows above.

But always fails that sinking star
As dawn mounts up the sky,
For they were made to come from far,
To greet—and say good-bye.

THE RAINSHOES OF MONSEIGNEUR

By G. F. Burnley

IT was an evening of mid-September. Monseigneur Vallière, Cardinal Archbishop of Touraine, after an absence of nearly fifty years, had come to spend a few weeks with his sister in her tiny cottage just beyond the great domain surrounding the chateau where they had been born and which he and she, the last of their race, had cheerfully relinquished into the hands of strangers at the call which bade them sell all they had and give to the poor.

He sat at the open window and read his evening office as he sipped his cup of chocolate. From time to time an inquiring bee buzzed in on an exploring expedition, and now and then a fly settled on his book, the Autumn volume of the Breviary. At intervals a black-bird trilled from somewhere out of sight. Monseigneur's chair was placed at an angle with the window so that by turning his head he could look into the tiny garden, broad as my handkerchief, and gay as a Shiraz rug, or into the yet tinier apartment with its low book-cases filled with a few sumptuously bound volumes of devotion, and its two jewels of art, Andrea del Sarto's little panel of the Adoration glowing with amethyst and scarlet, and Bouguereau's great "Harvest"—a painting fit for an emperor—which seemed to let a flood of sunlight into the room. These were the only relics of monseigneur's great fortune. The poor of Tours had had all the rest at the time of the great strike, when ten thousand mouths had fed at the archbishop's table through seven long Winter months.

Mademoiselle Yvonne, his sister, softly entered and came and stood at the cardinal's elbow. She was silent

for a moment; then she turned her head and called through the open door:

"Babette, bring monseigneur's rainshoes."

Her clear voice penetrated to the little kitchen where Babette bustled among her shining crockery.

Monseigneur looked earnestly into the garden.

"But Yvonne," he remonstrated gently, "I shall not need them. It has scarcely rained through the day."

Of course it was as though he had not spoken. From some inner region came a sound of quick steps, and Babette appeared bringing the rainshoes.

Then Mademoiselle Yvonne continued: "Yesterday, while you were visiting the cobbler's wife, Madame de Vrou called and left her cards. She has a party at the chateau to celebrate the betrothal of her daughter. You should go and offer our congratulations."

For some moments monseigneur did not answer, but sat in a reverie under the clear gaze of his sister. At last he spoke, a little doubtfully.

"At once?" he said. "So soon?"

"But surely," said Mademoiselle Yvonne with decision, "in days gone by they were our oldest friends. It is expected of you."

"And monseigneur must not stay to dine," said Babette, "for the night air at this season is bad for his chest."

"Also you must wear the rainshoes," continued Mademoiselle Yvonne, "and do not tread on the damp grass."

The prelate saw that resistance was in vain. He exchanged the thin shoes with the silver buckles which he wore in the house for the stouter ones made by the village shoemaker. He took

his broad hat with its cord and tassel from Babette and the cane with the silver top which Mademoiselle Yvonne handed to him, and passed through the long French window out into the garden fresh with the gentle shower which had fallen during the day, glowing with all manner of flower and fresh with every herb. Followed by his sister and old Babette, he walked slowly up the narrow path to the gate flanked by two rose-bushes, stooping once to poke inquiringly at a chrysanthemum, and once to push a snail out of harm that had encroached on the pathway. Then he opened the gate, which squeaked gently, and turned down the long white road which ran in the direction of the chateau.

The two women stood on each side of the gate and watched; Mademoiselle Yvonne, in whose eyes, brown like those of monseigneur, lay the saintly sweetness that you see in pictures of Saint Catherine, and old Babette, with rosy cheeks and shrewd blue eyes, in her cap of wonderful starched linen. Together they stood and gazed after monseigneur's retreating tall form and straight, in its black soutane, for all his three-score years.

"So tall!" murmured Mademoiselle Yvonne.

"And slender!" echoed old Babette. He was their idol, in their eyes the perfection of manhood.

Breviary in hand, monseigneur walked down the long straight road, aglow with the sunset which cast crimson reflections on his face. As he walked he repeated the words of the Psalm which happened to be, "I was glad when they said," and the prelate, as the rule enjoins, repeated every word softly beneath his breath. Presently a distant lark took up the strain. "It seems we have a choir at Compline," he murmured, smiling.

The lane was bordered by a high hawthorn-hedge, and after walking for some three-quarters of a mile monseigneur came to a pair of massive pillars inclosing a lofty iron gate surmounted by a coronet and a coat-of-arms. The gate formed the entrance

to a long avenue bordered by great horse-chestnuts and leading to a white chateau of the time of Louis Seize. Monseigneur stood for a few moments revolving many memories in his mind, and then advanced slowly up the avenue and, ascending the broad perron, rang the bell.

The door was opened by a footman who stared hard. Cardinal Vallière, in his modest cassock, a little threadbare, and his wide-brimmed hat, which had obviously seen many seasons' wear, looked more the village curé than a prince of the Church. To monseigneur's modest inquiry the servant said that his mistress was busy in the garden; she would be in to five-o'clock tea, he supposed; if Monsieur le Curé wished to see her he might wait in the library.

Monseigneur's mildness was proof against a footman's insolence.

"I will go and find madame," he said; and turning, he descended the steps and made his way along the garden paths, here and there stopping to gaze out over some well-remembered prospect of lawn or distant forest, stooping to examine a rose-bush or pausing to listen as a thrush poured out a cascade of song from some nearby thicket.

At last he came to a long alley of linden trees, and here he stepped very softly among the yellowing leaves which had just begun to feel the touch of Autumn, for every footfall disturbed the memories of his youth. He had in mind a certain patch of lawn with a rustic bench and a sundial which he had not seen for forty years.

Finally, threading the long winding alley he came to the spot, and when he raised his eyes he saw to his astonishment that the place was tenanted, for a young lady dressed in white sat upon the bench. Beside her lay her hat with blue ribbons, upon her knee was an open book and facing her stood a young man, handsome, broad-shouldered, and very sulky.

Monseigneur paused; the two were too much interested in their own affairs to have perceived the cardinal's

quiet approach, and he prepared to withdraw gently as he had come. But as he turned to go monseigneur heard these words uttered in a tone of tragedy:

"Well, Félice, if you wish to consider our engagement at an end, it is fortunately not too late."

"You are too absurd, Henry. I am tired of your ridiculous jealousy and this constant bickering." The girl stood up, a delicate picture, sapphire eyes aflame, lips lightly parted.

"We will do as you wish," she continued, "since, as you say, it is luckily not too late." And monseigneur saw that she drew something from her finger and offered it to the youth, who held out his hand to take it.

The movement brought them face to face with the cardinal, who stood half-hidden by the shrubbery, just turning to retire as cautiously as he could. The youth gave an exclamation, the girl started violently at this sudden appearance of a stranger, and a ray of light flashed from her hand to the ground. Monseigneur noted where it lay, and noted also the heavenly blush that colored the girl's cheeks.

With all his simplicity Cardinal Vallière was a man of the world, equal in a moment to any social emergency. He gave no sign of embarrassment, but removed his wide hat. The manners of the youth, to give him his due, were excellent. He returned the prelate's salutation with a profound bow, the girl with an inclination of her pretty head, and the two waited for monseigneur to speak.

"Good evening," he said. "Have I the honor to address Mademoiselle de Vrou?"

"I am Félice de Vrou," she said. "This is Mr. Sinclair."

The youth bowed again with a somewhat preoccupied air and with his eyes bent to search the grass at his feet. There was nothing in the manner of either of these well-bred young people to indicate that hearts were being broken and that a diamond of great price was lost.

"My name is Vallière," said monseigneur simply, very successfully concealing a smile. "My sister and I are neighbors of yours."

It was evident that the name conveyed nothing to either of his hearers. Each showed the courtesy that perfect breeding accords to an elderly parish priest, which is something a little different from the deference one pays to a cardinal-archbishop. The girl's eyes were downcast, and the attitude suited her very well. The eyes of the young man were also bent toward the grass, which gave him also a modest appearance that was not at all natural to him.

A little gentle amusement lurked in the cardinal's eyes. He addressed the girl.

"I knew your mother," he said, "long ago."

"That must have been when she was a girl," said mademoiselle, "in the days when my grandfather and grandmother used to pay long visits here. I have heard my mother say that the former owners of this house were her very dear friends. You would like to see her, would you not? She will probably be here in a little while, for this is a favorite spot of hers. Will you not sit down and wait for her?"

She made room at her side. Monseigneur came and sat beside her. The youth remained standing, and continued to search the grass with his eyes.

"I have spent many happy days in this chateau," continued monseigneur, "ere they thought of you, mademoiselle, or of you, young sir."

The youth had begun to assume an expression of slight boredom; the girl was listening, all sweetness.

"In those days also," resumed the cardinal after a slight pause, "a young lady used to come here often and sit upon this very bench."

"Was she pretty?" inquired Mademoiselle de Vrou timidly.

"Mademoiselle," said Cardinal Vallière, "her eyes were blue as your own, her cheeks were like a ripe peach, and she was about your own height." His

smile left no doubt that, though he appeared to have evaded the question, he had really answered it. "She was betrothed," continued monseigneur, without pausing.

"Did she marry him?" asked mademoiselle quickly, and in the next instant was crimson with mortification.

"No!" said the cardinal abruptly.

"Oh, oh!" said the girl. Then after a long pause, "Do you know why?"

At the heavenly modulation of her voice the sulky youth raised his eyes; their looks may have met.

"Because, mademoiselle, the girl was proud"—the words were gentle yet uttered with some severity, and mademoiselle looked down and blushed—"and the young man was a fool." Monseigneur spoke crossly and looked at the youth, who had turned his back, but it was evident that he heard for his ears were suddenly on fire. "A little foolish trifle came between them. The young fool was a soldier and went away to the wars thinking himself a hero. He was wounded." Mademoiselle looked up quickly at a long scar which furrowed the prelate's cheek. "A year passed and they told him that she was married. He became a priest. God gets woman's leavings often enough," he ended with a note of unexpected bitterness.

For a while there was silence. Then Cardinal Vallière rose abruptly, took a step forward and bent where the sunset beams were reflected, as it seemed, from a large dewdrop.

"I think this may be yours, young gentleman," he said, holding out a ring to the youth, "or perhaps, mademoiselle, it may belong to you?"

"Yes, it is mine," said Mademoiselle de Vrou quickly.

Nevertheless the cardinal, in seeming absence of mind, handed the ring to the youth and turned, for a sound of quick footsteps and a flutter of drapery sounded upon the garden path.

When he faced the two a moment later it was upon the girl's finger that the ring sparkled, and when monseigneur looked at her she lightly blushed, while the sulky expression of the youth

had given place to a smile; seen thus he was quite passably good-looking.

At this moment a white-haired lady appeared among the bushes dressed in deep mourning. Two spaniels accompanied her.

"My mother!" said the girl.

For an instant the lady surveyed the group; then when she saw Cardinal Vallière, a wonderful light came into her eyes.

"My dear Lord Cardinal!" she said softly, and advanced quickly to where he stood.

"You, Marie!" cried monseigneur. For a moment they stood hand in hand. Then a marvelous thing happened.

A little sudden cry came from Mademoiselle de Vrou. She was kneeling on the grass with outstretched hand. And in her pink palm lay a broad, old-fashioned ring set with diamonds. It seemed to have lain in the earth for a long while, for it was thickly incrustated with mould, through which the gems sparkled with scattered light.

Simultaneously the lady and Cardinal Vallière took a step forward.

"My ring!" they cried together.

There was silence. A thousand questions and answers passed between their eyes in a single instant.

Monseigneur was the first to speak.

"Surely, madame, it is your ring," he said.

The girl rose to her feet. But notwithstanding his answer she handed the ring to monseigneur, shyly smiling. He took it and laid it in the lady's hand.

Madame de Vrou took her handkerchief of fine lace and tenderly removed the traces of soil which clung to it. Then she placed it upon her finger.

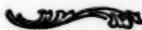
"This ring was given me by a dear friend long ago," she said, with long pauses between the words. "After he went away I used to wear it on a chain around my neck. One evening I came here and lost it. It was the day the news came that you were wounded. Ah! you cannot tell the many hours I have spent in searching. I thought I knew every inch of the ground by heart. And now that it should be found again!"

Her last words were addressed to Cardinal Vallière, for the youth and the girl had gone on and could be seen walking slowly along the yew paths in the last rays of the sunset which came and made a great radiance upon the huge façade of the chateau, turning every window to fire, gilding the tips of the branches, and wonderfully illumi-

nating the figures of Madame de Vrou and monseigneur.

When Cardinal Vallière arrived home Babette's first glance was at his feet.

"It is fortunate," she said, "that monseigneur wore his rainshoes. He seems to have been treading in the damp grass."



ICONOCLAST

By Jeannette I. Helm

I KNOW not which of you I hate the more—
The idol false which blinded me,
Or you, whose clumsy hand so rudely tore
The veil from my divinity!

Was I not happier far when kneeling there
Before that self-made god of mine,
Than when you swept the flowered altar bare,
And left me with an empty shrine?

What though my idol's feet were wholly clay—
Might not my faith have turned them gold,
As when the pallid East by full-flushed Day
Is changed to glories manifold?

Yea, hate is mine, but chiefly for this last:
That of the whole world it was you
Yourself who played the stern Iconoclast,
Yet are the fallen idol too!



A TRAMP'S EXCUSE

"WHY are you forced to beg?"

"I can't get work at my profession."

"How is that?"

"Well, you see, I used to be a handwriting expert, but these blamed typewriters have put me out of business."

STARBUCK, PACIFICATOR

By Roland Franklyn Andrews

YOUNG Starbuck was tired of sitting through very long dinners and of mechanically revolving in dances. He possessed so much money that he knew he should find very little satisfaction in the pursuit of other people's, and, in America, they have not yet mastered outdoor country life in the Winter. Therefore, young Starbuck went to the tiny republic of Amorilla, because there was a revolution there.

When the banana steamer dropped him on the disreputable pier at San Cristobal, which is the capital of Amorilla, he was disappointed. There were no warships of interested foreign powers in the harbor and the sole occupant of the pier did not look belligerent, but merely sleepy. Moreover, the green and gold banner of the established government hung peacefully from the staff on the sheet-iron custom-house at the head of the pier, and there were no untoward noises from the city beyond. The sleepy citizen told Starbuck in questionable English the way to the official residence of the American representative, but declined a lucrative offer to act as guide. Therefore, young Starbuck betook himself to the official residence with deep misgivings. "I might as well have stayed home and played bridge," he said.

At the official residence he was welcomed into a whitewashed office by a stout person of olive tint, who was obviously not American. "I am the Señor Francisco Moreira," he explained grandly. "It is my honor to be the offeacial agent, and in the absence of the Señor Smeethkins, the offeacial head of the legation."

"And where is Smithkins?" demanded young Starbuck, fanning himself. "Some people in Washington gave me letters to him."

The Señor Francisco Moreira gave a Latinized version of the jovial American wink. "The Señor Smeethkins," he answered, "has found it wise to make offeacial visit to Port au Roi in the seester republic of Bolvorado. In such a season, as the señor doubtless understands, the climate at Port au Roi is much the more healthy. And at Port au Roi there is also the cable, by which the Señor Smeethkins can make the easy communication with the department. But if the señor bears documents, I——"

"Not documents," interposed Starbuck, "just letters—personal letters. Introductions, you understand."

"I understand perfectly, señor." Señor Moreira bowed low and winked a second time. "Believe me, I am close in the confidence of the Señor Smeethkins. If I can serve——"

"You can serve," said young Starbuck, "by telling me whether it's the newspapers or Smithkins that's telling the truth about your revolution down here. They're printing dispatches that say there's a jolly row, and the steamer men said there was something going on, but the people at Washington told me that Smithkin cabled it was just a bit of local disturbance that needn't worry anybody. I rather banked on the newspapers, but now," he concluded plaintively, "I've come all the way down here to find things as peaceful as an overheated tea party."

"Peace!" The stout Moreira, with obvious anxiety to please, held up a pudgy finger. "Listen, señor!"

Starbuck paused. Outside, on the hot, uneven pavement, he heard the patter of bare feet and excited, high-keyed chattering. He stepped to the door. Down the street came a half-company of little rat soldiers, in tawdry uniforms, muskets carried in a dozen different positions, no two men in step and most of them talking volubly despite the presence of a gorgeous officer, who with inflated chest, marched proudly at the fore. Starbuck's first impulse was to laugh, for the little rat soldiers were prodigiously like the armies of the musical plays, their ancient rod bayonets were slung at most peculiar parts of their anatomies, and the important officer, in his profusion of gold lace, strutted for all the world like a fat turkey-cock.

But young Starbuck looked again, and did not laugh. In the midst of the soiled and tattered half-company, marched a dozen other little rat men, in cheap drill clothing and queer conical hats, whose wizened faces were stamped with blind terror, and who clanked chains at wrists and ankles.

"See here," said young Starbuck sharply. "What's all this?"

Moreira shrugged his dumpty shoulders. "You complained of the peace, señor," he answered. "You see the morning execution. See—one—two—three—twelve of them to stand against the wall. And tomorrow there will be more. It is the revolution."

"Do you mean," cried young Starbuck, "that they're going to shoot them—those little chaps in the irons! Why, man, they're only boys!"

Again Moreira wriggled in deprecation. "El Presidente has said they are conspirators," he responded. "A moment now, and they will be—not conspirators. The peace is not great, señor."

"But—" Young Starbuck was plunging into excited reply, when the room suddenly filled with sound so mighty that it drowned his voice. The sound came from a very large man, who perspired profusely and who brandished an enormous white helmet in the face of the fat "offeicial representa-

tive." Starbuck wondered how anyone, whose smallest movement seemed productive of so much clamor, could possibly have entered without his knowledge, but the volume of the outcry made even speculation impossible.

"See here," yelled the big man, dancing threateningly before Moreira. "How long is this going to keep on? How long, you tropical blister, you, are you going to let this morning murdering run before you get a cruiser down here to blow this (minutely particularized) republic back somewhere up into the hills? Say now——"

Señor Moreira backed against the wall and waved his hand. "The Señor Smeethkins——" he began.

"I don't want to know anything about that miserable quinine tank of a Smithkins," yelled the big man; "what I want to know about is that cruiser." He wheeled suddenly on Starbuck. "If any idiot in Washington has had the sense to fire Smithkins, I——"

"I'm quite unofficial," interposed Starbuck, "What's the row?"

"Row!" The accompanying explosion made the big man's face fairly purple. "Row!" he choked again. "You're white, ain't you? Yes. And you came from God's country. And you ain't tied up to Moreira? Well, you come out of here quick, till I talk to you."

And clutching young Starbuck's arm, he hurried him, despite the voluble protests of Señor Moreira, out into the street, past the wine-shop at the corner of the plaza and finally planted him triumphantly at a table in the inn.

The inn was like all inns in Central American towns. It was moderately cool, and it had before it a striped awning, under which one could look out at the statue of some great liberator which always stands in the centre of Central American plazas, and at the old yellow church which is just as certain to stand among the palms beyond. There was an Indian woman who crouched at the rear, who tossed tortillas, and there were other things which seemed very novel and very interest-

ing to young Starbuck, and concerning which he would have liked to ask questions, but the big man was in no mood for calm discussion.

He banged his great helmet on the table as though he wished to smash it. "My name's Lang," he yelled, "Benjamin K. Lang," and he scowled threateningly at the fat innkeeper as though he expected the announcement to be challenged.

Starbuck bowed.

"I can tell you the whole dirty story in two seconds," continued the big man in tones of thunder, and forthwith consumed some thirty chronological units in violent profanity. "Have a drink," he commanded at the end.

The drink, which was as undeniably lager beer as can be the case with any lager beer which has traveled far from home, and which has known but surreptitious acquaintance with ice, seemed to soothe the spirit of Benjamin K. Lang. He spoke with comparative coherence. In words of fluency and feeling he was at last able to explain. There was a revolution. It was a fairly popular revolution, albeit deplorable from the standpoint of common sense. It was aimed against President Norte and its inspiration was the standard inspiration for such disturbances in these latitudes, the knowledge that the executive was preparing to follow numerous distinguished examples by betaking himself to Paris. There was no great objection to the departure of the President, but strong feeling came with the certainty that he intended to take with him practically all the state funds of the republic of Amorilla, said funds having, of recent date, been largely increased by reason of excessive taxation. Mr. Lang's sole interest in the matter, explained in English of singular violence, lay in the fact that as a representative of an American company he was endeavoring to work certain asphalt lakes outside the city, and found himself hopelessly incommoded. Thus far the revolution was regular and orthodox even to the suffering American colony with the concession. The two original features of the situation were that the asphalt

company had not excited its home Government to the extent of crushing one side or the other for the benefit of American trade, and that President Norte had been a reasonably satisfactory executive up to the time he had journeyed far from home on presumable business of state, and had returned, bringing with him a most remarkable wife, reputed to have been previously an adornment of the American lyric stage.

"Damn it!" protested Mr. Lang, "I haven't got the money to keep both sides of this fight decently bribed, and when one gets ahead of the other, why, the other just naturally grabs my lakes and shoots up my greasers for conspirators. Those were greasers of mine you saw 'em taking down. I tell you, it's criminal. We've got to have a cruiser here, quick."

"Smithkins," suggested young Starbuck, half-amused.

"Smithkins is hand and glove with Norte's gang. He and Moreira, too. That's why I pulled you out. The department knows it, and won't pay any attention to him until it's unwound ten yards of red tape to investigate. You're sure you ain't official?"

"Perfectly," said young Starbuck; "I'm a Democrat."

"Well, Moreira thinks so, anyway. Keep on letting him. It may scare him. Damn it, I wish we were a London crowd. I'd have the whole Channel fleet over playing ring-around-the-rosy and pitching lyddite satchet into that comic-opera queen's boudoir. Guess my directors must be bearing the stock."

"But where is the fighting?" questioned young Starbuck. "That's what I came to look at."

"Well, be careful about looking for it after dark or it'll jump up and stick you in the back." Mr. Lang made vivid motions with his forefinger. "That's what would happen to Smithkins if his health wasn't good enough to keep him in Port au Roi. The active, insurgent patriots, bossed by Old Man Ojeda, are outside, monkeying with my asphalt lakes, afraid to come in, and

Norte is shut up in his palace afraid to come out, even to run for the steamer, because there's a lot of inactive patriots here in town, calmly goin' about their business in their own damned way, but very hopefully waitin' for a chance to his fifth rib. Norte's gang doesn't know who's who, and Ojeda's crowd doesn't know who's who, and between them they're shooting everybody they can't catalogue. They're trying to scare each other out, and how can I get men to work, when a job with a protestin' American's viewed as suspicious and as good as a call for the undertaker? They don't know what business is down here. I tell you it's demoralizin'."

"But, who is in the right?" Young Starbuck still dealt with ethics.

Mr. Lang smote the table. "Don't talk foolish!" he thundered. "I've been through so much it gets me all het up. There isn't any right. When you've been South of the Gulf a spell you'll know there never is in these darn revolutions. All we want is a cruiser to come down here and lick one side or the other, so we can get out that asphalt, and what I want to know is if you can turn the trick."

"I don't think I can produce a cruiser," reflected young Starbuck, "but perhaps I can help some way." The prospect of participance in a revolution seemed to him more attractive than his originally chosen rôle of spectator. "It seems rather amusing," he said.

"Amusing!" exploded Lang. "Amusing! It's crippin' business. That's what it's doin'. Ain't you an American?"

"Oh, yes," said young Starbuck, "but then you see I'm a Son of the Revolution, too."

Mr. Lang snorted. "There's some more Sons," he snarled. "Comin' back from their mornin' murder. Might as well have unions down here as to have them carrying on this way. How's the laborin' man goin' to thrive if they're goin' to shoot him up all the while?"

With clatter of accoutrements, the firing party was tramping back to barracks. The gaudy little officer still

strutted before and the rat-soldiers straggled after, in even more absurd disorder than when they had passed the official residence. But this time they were surrounding no frightened little men in dirty drill and the chains which had clanked on the prisoners were now slung over uniformed soldiers.

Young Starbuck set down his glass and gripped the table's edge. He saw the innkeeper scowl, for just an instant, but the Indian woman was still singing over her tortillas and the rat-soldiers were laughing shrilly.

"They've been killing them," whispered young Starbuck in awful understanding.

"Of course they have!" barked Lang. "Darned murderers! Look at that walking delegate, with the sword!"

Young Starbuck was silent. He felt sick and faint. It was not the realization that human life had been ended, but the laughter of the mean-faced men who had ended them, and the singing of the Indian woman and the lazy sunshine of the white-walled town, placidly unmindful of the horror in its midst. He turned to Lang. The giant, scornful of espionage, was shaking his fist at the receding soldiery and hurling profane defiance.

"It's awful," said young Starbuck, who was not used to such things. "We've got to stop it. Is there any way I could get to see the President?"

"See him!" roared Lang. "Of course you can. By this time Moreira has him shaking so with yarns about a Yank investigation that he'll lick your boots. Come on if you like, and throw some sort of a bluff at him. Perhaps you can. If somethin' ain't done for the asphalt industry pretty soon, I'll lose my job."

"But, remember, I don't represent the Government," objected Starbuck.

"Just keep tellin' him that. Keep tellin' it fast. In Amorilla the best way to make a man think you're lyin' is to tell him straight truth." And Mr. Lang proceeded with a high-powered estimate of the Amorilla national morality, which lasted until he halted with his charge before the grilled gates

which guard the palace of El Presidente. "By thunder!" he panted, as he flourished his helmet before his perspiring face, "we're doin' things in a hurry even if we aren't doin' anything. Go in now and see if you can talk him into being a white man. Keep clear of his wife, though. Every time I talk to her I get mad."

A stunted soldier, whose green and gold trappings made incongruous contrast with his bare, brown feet and drooping cigarette, shuffled toward them, advancing his rifle threateningly. Mr. Lang bespoke him in a masterful mixture of two languages.

"No hablo," grunted the man with a scowl.

"No hablo, eh?" The shrill rise in Mr. Lang's voice indicated that he resented the reflection upon his Spanish. "Well, you get somebody to take this hombre in to your old political atrocity mighty quick or I'll harpoon your gizzard with your own bayonet. You hablo that, don't you? Yes? Yelp, now, yelp!"

The soldier fell back, shouting, as Mr. Lang towered over him. "Sufferin' American eagle," complained the big man, "if this darned army bothers me much more, I'll lick it. It's too tryin'. Here's some more of 'em."

It was the gaudy officer of the firing squad and an accompanying corporal who, in response to the sentry's clamor, had appeared on the other side of the gate. Mr. Lang made forcible explanation. Young Starbuck, standing placidly by, heard himself vividly introduced as a very great personage who had hastened to Amorilla because of America's interest in Amorilla's revolution. He gathered that he was clothed with supreme powers and that it behooved El Presidente Norte to listen to him attentively. "You treat him right," finished the big man convincingly, "or he'll have a lot of regulars down here that wear blue shirts and chew tobacco and they'll manhandle you fellows promiscuous."

As the officer and the corporal tugged at the gate's bars, Lang turned to young Starbuck. "What are you

goin' to say to him?" he demanded. Young Starbuck marveled at the oddity of such presentation to national authority, but he reflected that Amorilla was very small and very young and probably greatly puzzled at its own status. He was not surprised when the officer and the corporal promptly swung the grilled gate. Lang faced him. "What are you going to say?" he persisted.

"I don't know," answered young Starbuck. "If I could get one side or the other to stop, it would settle things, wouldn't it?"

"It would," agreed Mr. Lang. "If you could fly you wouldn't need to bother with elevators. Try somethin' reasonable."

"Enter, Señor Starbuck," urged the officer, bowing low. "El Presidente has given the order to admit you at once eef you honor heem with a call."

Mr. Lang winked expressively. "I'll wait," he said. "If you need anything, ring." And, as young Starbuck walked with the officer down the palm-lined avenue, he looked back to see the big man belligerently haranguing the cowering sentry.

Even in revolution time fewer barriers seemed to hedge El Presidente Norte than is usually the case in Latin America. Starbuck saw machine guns and slovenly infantry sprawled about stacked rifles in the little park which surrounded the palace, but after he had passed a brace of sentries who scrambled into port arms at the doorway, he encountered only a singularly oily, secretary sort of man in white linen, who bowed obsequiously in response to the officer, and some functionaries whose uniform was obviously that of livery. They kept him waiting but a moment in a very white room with a floor of polished flags, and then they ceremoniously threw open a door and admitted him to the presence of El Presidente Norte.

El Presidente sat behind a desk of mahogany, carefully placed in the centre of a large chamber whose walls were lined with books. In thorough sympathy with the theatrically schol-

astic atmosphere of the volumes was El Presidente himself, who, with head resting on an olive hand, was pouring over a huge tome. Only great statesmen or popular actors ever read in that attitude and when El Presidente rose, a waspy, undersized man with sharp, shifty eyes and a scrubby black beard, young Starbuck dismissed the statesman hypothesis as improbable. The histrionic theory was strengthened when El Presidente waved a slender brown hand and spoke in excellent English.

"Welcome, Señor Starbuck," he said. "Welcome as joyful as may be given in the present state of my unhappy country."

Young Starbuck shook hands. He feared vaguely that El Presidente's extended member was intended to be kissed, but he decided on a course of undeviating equality.

"You have come—" began El Presidente.

"I have come," said young Starbuck, "to tell you that it isn't right to kill people in cold blood the way you are doing." He had meant to say more in his opening sentence, but of a sudden the utter absurdity in the situation of a very young and very unofficial American dictatorially discussing a revolution with the ruler of a revolutionary nation fell upon him and oppressed him into silence.

El Presidente shrugged the well-padded shoulders of his frock coat. "I have heard much of the—ah—direct diplomacy of your magnificent country," he breathed. "Doubtless, you bear from the Señor Smithkins—"

"I don't bear anything from the Señor Smithkins," protested young Starbuck. "Smithkins is going to be fired soon after I get home."

El Presidente's effusive smile fled for an instant, to be mechanically returned. "Then your—ah—secretary is not pleased with the Señor Smithkins?"

"Tisn't my secretary," said young Starbuck. "It's the governor—my governor. He doesn't ordinarily mix in politics, but I think I've heard him

say he owns some senators and congressmen and such like—and anyway I'm going to have him stop this killing business."

"The governor! The senators! The congressmen! You will have them stop—perhaps, señor, you will present your credentials."

"I tell you I haven't any credentials," snapped young Starbuck. "I'm quite unofficial."

"Unofficial! Of course, of course, señor. I understand perfectly—perfectly." El Presidente's voice was satin. "Will you not be seated while we talk—the business, as you American diplomats say?"

Young Starbuck sat down. When he had lit a cigarette and put his hands firmly upon the arms of his chair, he felt surer and steadier and more clear in his mind. Presently he found himself talking easily, withal he spoke with great earnestness. "I came down here," he began, "just to see your revolution."

El Presidente purred soft assent. "I understand—perfectly," he agreed. "You came to observe—unofficially."

Young Starbuck pressed on without pause for vain explanation. The sum of his argument was that El Presidente's morning executions were brutally inhuman and must stop. Moreover, they must stop at once. All of young Starbuck's previous efforts along such lines had been directed toward stablemen who kicked horses or people at his father's country place who beat the dogs. Despite his strange environment and the fact that he was reproving the chief magistrate of a republic who shot his fellow-citizens at will, the circumstances seemed to him practically the same.

El Presidente demurred softly, but at length. Did the Señor Starbuck understand the grave, political condition of his unfortunate nation? No. Had the señor considered that Amorrilla was a pitifully small country—scarcely so large as a single one of the señor's cities at home? Did he realize the stern exigencies of the situation? And did he, El Presidente, understand

the señor to tell him that the great sister republic would send warships to force him into submission to these brutal and degraded revolutionary destroyers?

Young Starbuck waved a weary hand. "Can't you understand," he pleaded, "that when I say I'm not connected with the government, I'm not? I might go hallooing around from now until doomsday and they wouldn't send as much as a navy yard tug to quiet me. All the same, you've got to stop."

"Ah—hl!" El Presidente sucked in his breath between closed teeth. "You—can—really—do—nothing, señor?"

"That isn't the point," urged young Starbuck. "What I—"

"But nothing, señor," purred El Presidente. "You can do nothing?"

"Carlos," interrupted a voice. "Carlos." Young Starbuck rose from his chair at the tone. It was distinctly feminine, but it carried a strange, clear note of mannish depth and it was very familiar.

"Carlos." A door at the rear opened. In the door stood a woman—a gloriously blond, Northern woman, vivid of coloring, deep of breast, twice the stature of diminutive El Presidente and more than twice his superior in the conviction of power. Her neck bared, in her tropic gown of white, was as straight and firm as a marble column, her great eyes with their half-drooped lids spoke arrogance and the hand at her side was tightly closed. "That man," she cried, "that asphalt fellow—" then at sight of young Starbuck standing at the other side of the desk—

"Good Lord!"

El Presidente had also risen. Before he could turn the woman flashed a single plea, made a single gesture with the hand at her side.

"Carissima," said El Presidente.

"Oh, I'm sure I beg your pardon," she laughed shrilly. "I thought you were alone. I—"

"You do not intrude, carissima," pronounced El Presidente gravely.

"The señor's business, it appears, was not of importance. Give me the honor to present Señor Starbuck, a caballero of your one-time country. Señor, Madame Norte, who rules Amorilla as she once ruled the hearts of your countrymen. You will know her, señor, when I tell you that before she honored Amorilla and its unworthy president, she was La Belle Vivian Durand, your foremost operatic singer."

From madame's stately brow shot a warning glance. Young Starbuck bowed low in return. "I have very, very often heard of madame," he stammered. "I—yes, very, very often—his excellency and I don't seem able to agree," he floundered, wheeling toward the woman in confused attempt at diversion.

"The señor has been telling me of an engagement in the city that is very pressing," said El Presidente evenly. "In such case we may not give ourselves pleasure by detaining him, carissima. I have the honor to wish you a very good day, Señor Starbuck." El Presidente's eyes were gleaming now and his teeth clicked. "It is my regret that your stay in Amorilla is to be so short. You will depart this evening on the steamer that brought you? Yes, it is true that the climate at Amorilla is not healthful at this season. It is my great sadness, señor—my great sadness. You must leave us at once, señor? May we meet again. Adios."

Young Starbuck stumbled awkwardly out. He was flushed with confusion and he was a little angry. It is not pleasant to be put at a distinct disadvantage by an oily man of half your size, whose skin is yellow and who would never be seen in the houses of the people you know at home. And when such a worsening is given before Vivian Durand, who was in the original octet and who always had a nasty gift of sophisticated sarcasm—young Starbuck almost kicked the fat officer when he walked into him in the corridor.

"I want to get out," he said. "I'm going home to have some pink forget-

me-nots tied in your lovely country. I—" Then his anger fled and he broke into a boyish laugh at the ridiculous figure he must have cut.

The laugh—it was a long, amusedly chuckling laugh, which dealt both with his own present and the future of Amorilla—was still on his lips, when the silken hangings which curiously lined much of the corridor parted and the woman seized his arm.

"Clear out, Aznar," she commanded roughly to the fat officer. "Now, Billy Starbuck, what are you going to do?"

"Why—why," said young Starbuck, noting in surprise that her breath was coming in queer short gasps, "why—er—hello, Vivian."

"Sh!" hissed the woman. "What are you going to do?"

Young Starbuck laughed again. "With my usual intelligence, I am going to tell father," he said. "Father is very popular with the noble Senate at home. When I explain to him, he may ask them to give some lessons in Christianity and deportment to the Republic of Amorilla. You understand, Vivian, if the gentleman in the library doesn't. Don't worry."

"I knew it!" cried the woman. "I knew it. And Carlos couldn't see what it meant. He's proud and he doesn't know the business end of the States. Billy, you'll have us all murdered—all of us—do you understand?—you'll have me murdered."

"Ah, no, I won't," protested young Starbuck sturdily, "I won't have anybody murdered. That's just the sort of thing I'm going to stop."

The woman's trembling hands clutched his shoulders. "Oh, you clean Yankee boy," she moaned. "Can't you see how it is? If these people with the revolution get the smallest hint of help, if your father as much as sends a ship here to tell Carlos he must do this or mustn't do that, they'll all turn against us—even those ragamuffin soldiers outside. And they'll kill us, Billy Starbuck. They'll kill us. I tell you, they hate us. They hate me. They blame me for all Carlos does.

And I've played fair. And I gave up everything for Carlos. I married him because I loved him. Oh, Billy Starbuck, don't have me killed by these awful things."

"Situation's very simple," said young Starbuck grandly, displaying his firmness; "you and Carlos leave."

"We can't. We can't. We'd be torn to pieces if we left the gates. They'd know we had the money. Oh, if we could only get somewhere away from this dreadful place."

Young Starbuck fell back against the wall. Freed from the embarrassment of El Presidente's cold gibes, his vision broadened and his brain paths, straight of line and crude of fashioning, were cleared. Ideas flashed upon him rapidly.

"The revolution's got to stop," he decided. "It's killing people and it's crippling business, and it's teaching Mr. Carlos bad manners. It's time the other crowd had a show, anyway. Say now"—his mind was grappling a daring but apparently feasible plan—"if I put you and your affable husband safe on board my banana boat tonight, will you leave the money behind, and go to America?"

"America," gasped the woman, "America! Oh, can you do it? Can you really do it, Billy? We've dreamed of it for months, but we haven't dared try. We'd leave the money to them gladly if we could only get away. We might starve, but we could live a little while. Go! If you could only do it, Carlos should go if I had to drag him. Oh, Billy, can you—can you do it?"

"Starve!" exclaimed young Starbuck in profound disgust. "Who's going to starve? I wouldn't stop your game without playing fair. You won't starve, Vivian. You are clever. Mannheim of the Syndicate told me so. I've got a new idea." Starbuck was jubilant at his own originality. "What do you say to starring in a comic opera? What do you say to that? You can have it full of revolutions if you want, and I don't mind backing a show for a while. Hang it, I ought to have some business, anyway."

"Billy—Billy"—the woman was gasping—"back in New York with the restaurants and the hansoms and the lights, and my own show! Oh, you don't mean it—and, Carlos—he's my husband—and I'm straight, Billy."

Young Starbuck flushed. "Of course you are," he snapped. "If you weren't, I'd bust your old revolution without paying for it. Can't anyone down here but Lang understand business?"

"But oh, Billy, it's too much. To be out of this awful place, where everybody wants to hurt us, and where I don't dare sleep—and to have my own show, with all the good lines and the solos—and to live in New York, and to go to Atlantic City again in the Summer. Oh, Billy, you can't do it. You can't get us away."

"Simple enough," asserted young Starbuck. "Simplest kind of a proposition. Could have been done long ago if anybody had thought of it. Makes me feel like the jokes I read in the funny papers. I always wonder why I didn't write them myself. See here, can you have Carlos ready to leave at six o'clock? And can you have him ready to leave behind all the money that doesn't really belong to him? That's the main point. If you can, I'll take you down to that nice, kind banana boat as safely as I could take you down Broadway—more so, I think. Only Carlos must mind, and he must play the game fairly. If he tries any tricks, I'll go home without him."

"Carlos shall mind!" cried the woman. "He will do as I tell him. He doesn't care for the money. It's only a very little, and we thought of taking it because there didn't seem to be any other way. We'll leave it gladly. He's stubborn now, only because he's desperate. It's I that got him into all this trouble, anyway. It's I who've kept him up. Oh, he'll do as I say. But how can you do it? How can you do it? We've planned for weeks—so many, many weeks—and we can't find a way."

Young Starbuck made a grand ges-

ture. "You will have to trust me for that," he announced. "I'm figuring it out now, and I tell you there isn't the least chance of difficulty. Why, it's nothing. I know perfectly well what I'm doing. Can't you take my word?"

The woman eyed him. Then her heavy lids rose and she sighed. "It's the last chance," she whispered. "It can't be any worse and I'll trust you, Billy Starbuck, because you've always run true, ever since you were a funny little college boy. We shall be ready at seven. But don't fail, Billy. Oh, don't fail!"

Young Starbuck took her hand. "I won't fail," he promised. "There isn't anything to fail about. It's just too easy if one goes about it sensibly. It's just a question of leaving that money behind you and making it in the show business. And I thank you for what you said—about being straight—Vivian. Good-bye."

He walked down the avenue with complacency and cheer written upon his face. He chatted with the fat Aznar and he nodded in friendly fashion to the rat-soldiery, sprawling about the two Gatlings which constituted the entire artillery strength of Amorilla. Lang, whom he found at the gate, pipe aflame and still at war with the slovenly sentry, he greeted gleefully.

"All arranged!" he cried. "The revolution's going to end tonight. I only hope the ending will suit the asphalt industry, because, you see, it's going to happen anyway, and I should rather like to have you pleased."

"Eh—what's that?" choked the startled Lang, falling back. "Going to end? Here, what you talkin' about? He didn't set up too much aguardiente, did he?"

Young Starbuck rapidly explained. "I used to know Madame Norte," he began, and then paused anxiously until Mr. Lang's paroxysm had passed. "And she knows what father could do if I should get him excited," he went on. "She's anxious to go back home, and Carlos is willing—or at least, he's going to be. Rather extensive business interests in New York demand

their attention, you see. They will leave Amorilla's money behind them, and with Brother Moreira and myself as official protectors, representing the United States of America, they're going to walk right down on board that steamer without anybody trying to hurt them. What you are going to do is to see your friend Ojeda and tell him that his crowd can have all Amorilla, and be hanged to them, after seven o'clock tonight. And you are also going to tell him that if anybody so much as shies the half of a brick at this happy Norte family on its way to the pier, or if I hear of any more executions after he comes into office, some vested interests, which belong to my governor, will have the United States government—it's two thousand miles high and three thousand miles wide—come down here and step on him. Is he a good business man? Can you impress this upon him? Can you make him understand?"

Mr. Lang was trembling with emotion. For moments he struggled, apparently searching himself for words to tell his feelings. "Understand?" he gasped. "Impress? You lovely, beautiful, star-spangled kid! Do you mean to tell me that's all there is to the finish of these fireworks?"

Young Starbuck nodded. "That's all," he said. "It's very simple. I wonder you hadn't thought of it yourself."

Again Mr. Lang choked.

"Hadn't you better be seeing Ojeda?" advised young Starbuck. "It all depends on him, you know."

Mr. Lang recovered. "I'll handle that old pie-faced atrocity," he promised. "He knows me. And he's probably scared to death now from hearing all day about you. Don't worry about him. I'm off, now. Want any help with Moreira?"

"No, thank you," replied young Starbuck. "I think he'll understand."

Wherein young Starbuck wrongly prognosticated, for Señor Moreira found such revelations as were made to him past all understanding. However, a shaky conscience and the changed

manner of the young man, who returned to him speaking decisively, as one expecting to be obeyed, fashioned him into a hurriedly obedient servitor. Secret communication, which he later established with the palace, added to his astonishment, but made him firm in the conviction that the instructions of Señor Starbuck were to be most faithfully executed. Therefore he hustled about the little white-walled office, assiduously providing brown-paper cigarettes and cold drinks for his distinguished visitor, until Lang, belaboring a ridiculously small pony, came steaming back.

"Hey!" yelled that jubilant individual, "I've caught the spirit of progress myself. I've gone you one better, Mr. Persuader of Presidents. I've not only yanked old Ojeda into the straight and narrow path, but I'll have him on hand to ride down to the boat in the same chariot with Norte. He's pretty popular just now, old Ojeda is, and nobody's going to throw things where there's a chance of hitting him. If you tried having a lot of soldiers for escort, they'd be taking pot shots at everybody. It's their nature. But old Ojeda, he's a regular life insurance policy. Only thing is, we've got to see that nothing happens to him from Norte's outfit before the parade begins and we've got to show him that the cash isn't going sailing, too."

Young Starbuck clapped his hands. "Very good," he commented gaily. "You are really quite businesslike, Lang."

"Watch me with the asphalt tomorrow," said Mr. Lang grimly. "Seven o'clock, you said, didn't you? Well, if we're going to take Ojeda to the party, it's time to start."

It was that late afternoon ride in the lumbering cabriolet which revealed clearly to young Starbuck the utter absurdity of the revolution in Amorilla. For all its blood and its bitterness, of strength it had none. The capital was beleaguered, yet unless one viewed the palace as a stronghold, there were no fortifications. There were rat-soldiers in the streets, but

you knew that most of them marched and killed for El Presidente only because he was the nearest authority, and for the moment it seemed safer to serve him than to serve another. Withal, their service was listless, save where they were suspicious for their own safety, and, where the streets dwindled into trails on the edges of the little city were the insurgents, similar rat-like men in similar mental state, who hid their arms and turned into peaceful peons at slight provocation. The besiegers feared to storm and the besieged feared to sally, and each side feared the other and each leader feared his own followers, while the followers doubted the loyalty of one another and killed when their doubts grew strong. It was only timid, incomplete anarchy, roused by the oppression of El Presidente Norte, but restrained by cupidity and fear.

General Ojeda, commander of the insurgent army and prospective president of Amorilla, the cabriolet picked up almost within rifle shot of the palace walls. He was a tiny man with wrinkled yellow features, and young Starbuck laughed as he saw the great liberator, with a clanking sword at his side and a glorious array of orders upon his breast, rise furtively from the tangled growth which choked a ditch at the roadside. It was with difficulty that he managed a ceremonious bow in response to the valiant soldier's impressive greeting. Lang nudged young Starbuck's ribs, and young Starbuck was close to spoiling the dramatic effect with a mouthful outburst.

"Get on to the satrap," whispered the big man. "H'ray for crime!"

Amorilla still talks in awe of the manner of El Presidente's departure. The cabriolet drove to the palace. Within were Lang, General Ojeda and young Starbuck. About the forms of the two latter were wrapped American flags. Over the rear of the vehicle floated another. "All in all," said young Starbuck, as he afterward described it at the club, "we looked like a torchlight campaign parade."

The populace saw them and was dumb. It was preparing, however, a mighty cheer, for the agents of Ojeda and Lang were in its midst spreading news of the peace. El Presidente received them at the door. His face was drawn and pale, but kings might have envied him his manner. In high formality he conducted them to the executive office and there, throwing open the door of a safe—young Starbuck had expected at the least a secret panel and a gloomy vault—he showed them the moneys of Amorilla, every peso of it in gold and parceled carefully in small bags.

"General Ojeda," spoke El Presidente grandly, "to you I surrender the funds of the state. They are pitifully small, for Amorilla has yet to win her place among the great nations of the world, and to you I confide the destinies of our unhappy country. May peace and prosperity rest once more upon its banner."

"And mind," warned young Starbuck, "that this money goes where it belongs, and doesn't stick to anybody's hands, otherwise——"

"Otherwise," concluded Mr. Lang, "you'll have some vested interests coming down in a white boat with guns sticking out of the bay-windows to officiate as district-attorney. You'd best be nice, Ojeda."

They drove to the pier through swarms of the insurgent army, quick to invade when danger was past, fraternizing joyously with the green and gold warriors of El Presidente. In the cabriolet sat the great Norte, still tense of countenance, erect and silent by the side of a radiant wife; Ojeda, bowing at the smallest outcry, and young Starbuck, still picturesquely decorated in the Stars and Stripes. Moreira was on the box, his chest expanded under his vivid decoration. A stern still fluttered the banner of the great republic, and everywhere in the throngs were the men of Lang and Ojeda, energetically pointing out the young but very great American personage who had ended the revolution and who had extended the awesome protection

of his mighty government to retiring El Presidente. Close after the cabriolet came Lang with the luggage cart. There were some cheers, there were some hoarse calls, which did not sound approving, and there were some black scowls, but there was not the smallest sign of attack or opposition.

"Just as comfy as can be," said young Starbuck cheerfully. "Everything always comes out all right, if you will only work along common sense business principles. Here's you, Mme. Norte and El Presidente and I going home to elevate the stage, here's General Ojeda relieving a tired official from the cares of the presidency, here's Lang forging ahead with the great asphalt industry and here's Amorilla going to be quiet and decent and live happily ever after. Just flutter the tail of your flag a little more, Moreira. Those chaps in the rear of the crowd may not see it plainly. There's a peculiar young fellow in New York who writes noisy musical shows. He writes Tenderloin talk, but he's very wise in his way. He says: 'You can't wave the American flag and get by unless you mean it.'"

Lang wrung his hand at the pier. "To think," he lamented, "that you've only been here a day. If you stayed a week, you'd be an emperor or something. I don't know now how you did it—I'm all stirred up and I can't understand—but you keep your eye on the asphalt market. It's going to boom."

A half-hour later young Starbuck stood leaning over the rail of the

Panamarian as she throbbled her way out to sea. Overhead was the splendid tropic moon. Far back at the end of the silvery wake, the city blazed *en fête*.

"There won't be any shooting people tomorrow," mused young Starbuck peacefully. He puffed at his cigarette. "There wasn't really very much to see," he continued. "It all happened in just one day. A revolution doesn't seem to be anything so very difficult if you get at it right. But I'm glad I took the trip. Yes, I'm glad I came." He threw the cigarette over the side.

"I say," he turned to El Presidente and Madame, who stood silently at his side, "there's a song I think we ought to have in the comic opera—our comic opera. It isn't original, but it's good. The Troop A fellows brought it home from the war. It goes like this:

"Home, boys, home, it's home
you ought to be,
Home, boys, home, in your
own countree.
Where the ash and the oak and
the bonny willow tree,
They all grow so pretty up in
North Amerikee.

"It's a good song, don't you think? I like the sentiment. I tell you, New York isn't so bad. It's good to be headed for home."

"Home—home," breathed the woman softly.

"Home," sighed El Presidente, "Amorilla, farewell. Ah, it is for the best."

"It is," said young Starbuck, "it certainly is."

A TRYING POSITION

FIRST TYPEWRITER—Is the work very hard where you are, Mame?

SECOND TYPEWRITER—Oh, fierce! There's six windows to be looked out of and me the only girl in the office.

GARE DU NORD

By E. F. Benson

THERE is a man somewhere in this world—unless he is dead—whom I hate more than I can possibly express. I do not know his name, nor do I know where he lives, otherwise I should seek him out, and hate him by contemplation, more intently and carefully. I am perfectly right to hate him; in fact, it would be very wrong of me not to. I am sure, too, that any right-minded person who takes the trouble to read these few pages will agree with me: not to hate this man, whose name I do not know, seems to me a very grave sin of omission, of which no respectable Christian should be lightly guilty.

I had arrived one chilly February morning at the Gare du Nord in Paris, in order to catch the early train—9.10 A.M., I think—back to London. Being English—I wished I had not been before the train started—I had followed that universal instinct which prompts English people when traveling abroad to arrive at stations, owing to their general distrust of "foreign ways," much earlier than is at all needful. We have to register our luggage, it is true, but then—again for an absolutely inscrutable reason—we have taken our railway ticket at least the day before, if not earlier, at the office of some agent for foreign travel, so that our manoeuvres on arrival at a foreign station do not actually require a longer period for their performance than those we are accustomed to execute in England. For all that, we continue to arrive earlier than we need, and I had done so on this occasion. Then, again following the instincts of my race, after I had secured a seat in

the train, and another in the restaurant-car for lunch *en route*, I descended again on to the platform and pounced on a liveried representative of the agent for foreign travel, in order to ask him a quantity of questions about the examination of luggage, the answers to which I already knew. So I gave him a small silver recompense for his kindness in telling me, bought a penny English paper for fourpence, and a volume of Tauchnitz, and went back to my carriage to wait another quarter of an hour before the train was timed to start.

There had entered in my absence, and was sitting on the seat opposite mine, the man I hate. A young French girl, of the typewriter or shop-assistant class, who talked the prettiest broken English, was sitting close beside him with her hand in his. His class was equally evident. It was the class that calls barmaids either by their Christian names or simply "Miss," and is employed in commercial enterprises. There are, of course, many admirable and wholly excellent persons so employed, but, as in every other employment, "there are others." And from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, this particular man was outside any pale whatever.

He and all that belonged to him was all wrong from beginning to end; his luggage was wrong, his dress was wrong, his voice was wrong, his mind and his soul were wrong. He was entirely cheap and gaudy; there was not a single canon of taste which his speech and appearance did not violate. He had crammed the luggage-racks on both sides of the carriage with bags,

just small enough to get in, so that he might avoid registration, and had taken up the whole of the available space. He had a black frock-coat on, and no doubt a top-hat reposed in his hat-box, but on his head he wore a cloth cap. He had a plaid tie with a ruby pin in it, so large and resplendent that it could not possibly have been real; he had a diamond ring of the same calibre on a finger which terminated in a dirty nail; he had a stick with a sham chamois-horn for handle; he had brown boots; he had detachable cuffs (and was even at this moment detaching them and putting them into one of his bags, in order, I am sure he would have said, that they should not get "soiled" on the journey), and though the rest of his hair was like lank sea-weed, the front lock was curled in three undulations over his forehead. Below that curl was a sharp though fatuous face; one could imagine him doing a smart piece of business, but till that moment I had not imagined that so huge a store of fatuousness could be contained in one set of features.

Just as I entered he was, as I have said, removing his cuffs and putting them into his bag. As he did this he showed some of its contents to the girl.

"There's a flask of brandy," he said. "*Odour vec*—I sy, ain't I getting on in your jargon—in case the sea is agitate, and there's more French for you."

"*Agité*, dear," said she.

"Well, I said agitate, didn't I? And there's the program of that music—all you took me to last night. By the wy, oo pide? Blest if I don't believe you did!"

"Ah, it is nothing, but nothing," said she.

"That may be, but it's not Ornglais for a feller's gurl to stand treat. 'Ow much?"

"Ah, nothing," she said again, "*absolument* nothing."

He took his hand out of the pocket in which it was exploring without much seriousness.

"Well, you are an 'orspitable people if you give shows like that for nothink," he said. "I sy, do you know any of

the gurls in the bally? There was one winkin' at me—narce little bit, too."

"Narce?" she asked, not understanding.

"Well, never mind. But think of me in old Orngleterre, waiting to come back to gay Patee."

"But you come?" she asked. "You said you come?"

"You bet I do. Another month and I'll be Pateeing again."

Providence, whose design was inexplicable enough in making this man at all was even more inexplicable in decreeing that this girl should be so genuinely attached to him. From her every gesture, from the caressing touch of her hand as she fingered those horrible detachable cuffs, from the soft eagerness of her eye as she looked into his odious face, it was clear beyond need of probation that her heart went with him to Orngleterre.

"But a whole month," she said, "a whole month! *Mon Dieu*, there will never be so long a month!"

She was so absorbed in him that she did not mind my presence opposite; he, I could clearly see from the fatuity of his smile, liked it, because he was demonstrating before a countryman his success as a lady-killer, and it was with a mean sense of his power that he put forth his fascinations.

"It's all part of the *ortornie cordial*," said he, glancing across at me. "Why, if the month's going to be so long, come to Orngleterre yourself."

"Ah, how I should love!" she said. "No! how I should love to! That is English."

But this parody of a man did not want her there; no doubt there was some barmaid in London who stood treat to him.

"And me to take you reound as a sarmple of French goods?" he asked. "Not if I know it. Why, there's the fiscal question on the trapeze. What would Mister Chimberlain sy to that?"

She contracted her eyebrows into a momentary frown, then laughed with a little uncertain tremor in her voice.

"Trapeze!" she cried. "Ah, *que tu es drôle! Tapis*."

There was the growing bustle of imminent departure outside; a voice in gradual crescendo came down the platform crying, "*À voitures*," and a ticket-collector entered to punch the tickets.

"Well, we're off," said he, "and you must 'ook it, unless you're coming to Orngleterre now. Good-bye to gay Paree for a month."

"Ah, *mon ami*," she said softly.

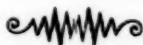
"Yes, and we'll be *ameeing* again soon," he said.

He kissed her loudly, and she went out down the corridor to the entrance

of the carriage. He let the window down, and talked to her with extreme facetiousness as she stood on the platform for a few seconds more. Then a little horn, like those used in toy-symphonies, sounded; then came a yell from the engine, and we started, he still leaning out of the window and nodding at her till we were out of the station.

Then he pulled the window up, for it was a bitter morning, winked at me, and pointed with his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the station.

"Pore little devil!" he said.



ROSE OF DEATH

By Richard Kirk

THE last sweet gift that life bestows,
When all the rest like shattered roses
Are scattered o'er the grass, this rose,
White rose of death upon his breast reposes.

O crimson garnerings of hours
Soon spent, would he exchange his boon
Of blossom for your flaunting flowers?—
His long cool night for life's fantastic noon?



ON THE HONEYMOON

SHE—You gave that waiter a dollar tip, and he hardly noticed us.
HE—Yes, dear—that alone was worth a dollar!



A DIFFERENCE

G LADYS—So that was her choice of a husband?
ETHEL—Oh, no! that was the chap she married.

THE PORTRAIT OF CLYMER

By Arthur Stanley Wheeler

WHILE awaiting Mrs. Clymer, Du Lhut stood on the library hearth-rug and stared at Clymer's portrait, which hung above the mantel, and which he himself had painted, years before. He had seen the portrait scores of times, but always gave it fresh attention, not because it was the work of his head and hands, but because it was so far beyond anything else he had done that it seemed the work of an inordinately clever stranger.

"It is as though I were reading my own obituary," he had once told Mrs. Clymer, with a cynicism worthy of Clymer himself. "I shall never do another thing half so good."

The picture had not been exhibited publicly, but was well known among artists. Old Brisset, toppling head of an already discredited school, used to beg permission to bring delegations of the younger generation of critics to view it, in order that he might witness their confusion. Rubbing his dry hands together as he listened to their conflicting comments, he would emit his harsh chuckle, and grate out a repetition of his first judgment, given before the paint was dry.

"Wrong, my children, all wrong! I have deceived you. This is not a portrait at all; it is Clymer."

Perhaps that was as near to the truth as criticism could be driven. At all events, the impression upon the casual visitor was less of the artist's skill than of the personality of the sitter—a result which redounded to Du Lhut's credit directly or indirectly, according to the observer's theory of the art of portraiture. Glancing up,

on entering the room, one saw a blade of a man, high of forehead, hook-nosed, who peered down from the canvas with intolerable, heavy-lidded eyes sardonically a-glitter. The picture was all edge, from the narrow dome to the long hands which showed above the lower rim of the frame, though there was no attempt at caricature, at accentuation, as there had been no need for it; one felt instinctively that the painter had but painted what he saw, and that here was, as near as might be, a human sword. Yet the ultimate appeal, the real humanity, of the portrait lay in subtle variations from this main theme, variations whereby was conveyed the undercurrent beneath the man's obstinate purpose—a hint of half-forgotten sweetness about the thin lips, a suggestion of Promethean suffering in the depths of the hard eyes, behind whose stony gaze dwelt ever a vulture, tearing at the vitals of the brain. It was this conflict of emotions, this flash view of the soul's eternal contradiction, which invariably arrested the attention of chance comers, and which had first caused Brisset to raise his withered hands, palms upward, to the shoulder, and exclaim, "It is not a portrait; it is Clymer!"

"Still admiring your own handiwork?"

Du Lhut turned, with a slight start, to face Eleanor Clymer. She had entered softly, as was her wont, and was looking from her caller to the portrait above him. Her full lips were curved in a faint smile, in which the painter fancied he saw an idealized reflection of Clymer's bitter grin. He shrugged irritably.

"Rather," he replied, "I was again paying homage to an achievement not my own."

Mrs. Clymer's smile broadened into the suggestion of a laugh. "He looks very natural today, doesn't he?"

The portrait was often a subject of jest between them, and by treating it lightly they were accustomed to skirt danger and hide their real feelings—a utilitarian substitution of the symbol for the thing. On this occasion, however, Du Lhut's mood was not attuned to the habitual badinage.

"Eleanor," he said, and by the sharpening of his tone she knew that his patience was worn thin, "Eleanor, how long must this go on?"

She turned from him with a raising of the shoulders which he might have interpreted as due to indifference had he known her less well.

"Owen has been gone nearly ten years, dear," he went on, "and there is no reason to suppose that he is alive. When will you marry me?"

She made no response, but crossed the room in silence and stared out of the window into the tenacious dusk of the early Spring evening. Du Lhut, too, fell silent, still standing beneath Clymer's portrait. Indeed, it was the woman who spoke first.

"Why do you want to torture yourself, Louis?" she asked at last, without turning. "Why not let well enough alone? We get along very comfortably as we are."

"That is untrue, and you know it," Du Lhut said. "I am not comfortable, and neither are you, Eleanor."

"Better a safe uncertainty than an uncertain safety."

He laughed harshly. "Put not your trust in paradoxes, my dear; a paradox is but an unsafe refuge for the doubtful—or, more accurately, for those who shrink from the issue of a direct question. Will you deny that you love me?"

"No."

"Then for God's sake marry me, and put an end to this unsatisfied craving that is blighting both of us!"

Another silence; then, abruptly, Du Lhut's passion mastered him.

"Are you going to devote your whole life to that self-worshiper?" he demanded. "Wasn't it enough for you to let him trample on you when he was alive, without sacrificing yourself to his memory now that he's dead? For dead he is, Eleanor, as surely as I stand here; Enoch Arden exists only in imaginative poetry, and Owen Clymer's bones have been rotting in an African swamp for more than half a decade. What is the use of pretending? You never loved him—never even respected him. Be just to yourself and to me."

Mrs. Clymer left the window, and walking over to Du Lhut put her hands on his shoulders.

"Ah, Louis, Louis," she said, with the patience of the mother for an unreasoning child. "How fatally easy it is to condemn selfishness in others! Suppose, being just to you and to myself, I should do an injustice to Owen?"

Du Lhut shook off the hands. "Owen, Owen, and always Owen!" he exclaimed. "In heaven's name, will there never be an end to Owen? Surely he had justice enough and to spare done him in life. I think I shall begin to see him in my sleep."

"Perhaps you will," she said gently. "I often see him."

He sighed, and prayed for self-control. His eyes, being lifted from the woman, encountered the portrait, and a sudden shiver ran through him, for it seemed as if Clymer were mocking him from the frame. Mastering the emotion, he extended his hand and apologized.

"I beg your pardon, Eleanor," he said. "I should have been less brutal. I'm not quite myself tonight—overwork, a tiring day. Try to forget what I said. Shall we go out to dinner?"

She took the hand, but did not reply immediately to the invitation. Instead she stood searching his face with perplexity in her eyes.

"I wish I knew what I ought to do, my dear," said she. "It's so hard for me to decide. I know there's not one chance in a thousand that Owen is

alive, and yet—" Her gaze, too, sought the portrait, and like Du Lhut, she shuddered, though for a different reason. The contrast between the pictured strong man on the wall and the real weak man standing before her was so evident. The one she had never loved, but could not escape because of his strength, while the other, whom she did love, commanded her pity by his very weakness. Heart and reason urged her toward Du Lhut; to cling to Clymer was to yield to something little higher than superstition. Yet Clymer was very strong, even in absence—in death itself. The portrait with its stabbing eyes. . . . it frightened her. Well, that road led to madness. Resolutely she turned to Du Lhut.

"Listen, Louis," she said. "We mustn't hesitate any more; we must decide, or rather, I must decide. It isn't fair to keep you longer in suspense. You've been very patient, my friend. Leave me tonight and come again tomorrow evening, I'll have your answer ready for you then."

Holding her hands, he looked down at her doubtfully. "You're sure that you are quite ready to decide, Eleanor? I can wait longer if need be."

She shook her head, smiling a little sadly at the vacillation which demanded an answer to a question, yet shrank before that answer when it seemed about to come. "Ah, no, my dear; you've waited long enough, and are quite right to ask a settlement. And I'm ready to give it to you. Only there are so many things for me to think of. You won't misunderstand, will you? It's not that I want to shut you out; I simply want to be very sure of my course, and I can't weigh the pros and cons accurately when your dear face is before me."

To Du Lhut, as he turned restlessly in his bed that night, it seemed that those last few hours of suspense were worse than all the long years that had preceded them. Removed from Eleanor's presence, he could see no cause for separation or even hesitation, and deplored his own weakness in not con-

tinuing, as he had begun, to insist on an immediate decision face to face. Yet, as is the way with lovers, while condemning himself for what he had not done, he feared the result of what he had done, even though he could conjure up no logical reason for such fear. What was Clymer, save an unpleasant memory? Clymer's death, at the hands of natives on the West Coast, had been credibly reported over half a decade before, and Du Lhut had little doubt of the truth of the report; nevertheless, he stood illogically in dread of Clymer—and scorned his own folly in so doing. His feeling for the man during the latter's life had been a mixture of fear, admiration and disgust: disgust for moral turpitude; admiration of intellectual capacity and indomitable will-power; and fear, because of the biting and intangible quality of soul which he had painted into the portrait, and which had made Owen Clymer an individuality, apart from other men. The mixture of emotions had doubtless been seasoned with a spice of raw hatred, because Clymer had possessed the woman whom he himself desired, but Du Lhut was man enough not to let this hatred prejudice his judgment of his fellow-man. Casting jealousy aside as he looked back, he could not but think that Clymer had received all necessary consideration, with good measure thrown in for interest. Could a man ask more from his wife than absolute faithfulness and untiring service, or from his wife's friend more than habitual self-control? To the best of Du Lhut's knowledge, Clymer had given in return nothing better than cynicism, perpetual demands, a restless and often antagonistic ambition. Clymer's daily life had been well-nigh pitiless, and the artist could find little pity for the man who had given none. To what cause, then, he wondered, was the shrinking which he experienced attributable? He puzzled over the question until exhaustion came to relieve his troubled brain, and fell at last into a sleep of fitful dreams, wherein he saw Eleanor, the calm, the self-contained, pursued, shrieking, with

mouth agape and eyes wide with horror, by Clymer's ghost, which seemed not to move, but to be borne along a wind without effort of its own, grimly fixed in purpose, and sardonically grim of eye.

As early as possible the next evening Du Lhut presented himself at Mrs. Clymer's house, somewhat worn as a result of his uneasy night, nervous, yet hopeful.

"Mrs. Clymer is expecting you, and will be down in a few moments, sir," the maid told him.

He passed into the library, and was straightwaysmitten with astonishment, for Clymer's portrait no longer hung above the mantel, and the place where it had been was blank. Before he had time to wonder overmuch, however, there was a faint rustle of skirts in the hall, and Eleanor came to him, clad in one of the soft, trailing gowns of indeterminate color, which he loved. She was very pale, but there was no hesitation in her manner as she advanced.

"The answer?" he asked hoarsely.

"Say it quickly, whatever it is."

"The answer," she replied, smiling, "is what you most desire."

Du Lhut could never distinctly remember the remainder of that evening. The transition from the long, dull, restrained monotony of uncertain waiting to the sure promise of hope fulfilled was so abrupt that he could scarcely grasp his happiness or realize his joy. Something of this feeling of reactive anticlimax seemed to communicate itself to, if indeed, it did not actually emanate from, Mrs. Clymer, for she was even more calm, more equable than was usual. Once only did she allow the intensity of her mental struggle to show, and that was when Du Lhut, with an unaccustomed tactlessness due, doubtless, to the sudden change of conditions, mentioned the absence of the portrait.

"If you love me, Louis," she said, almost with sharpness, "never speak to me of that matter again. I took the picture down this morning, and hid it away where neither I nor anyone else will see it." She paused, and then,

after a moment, reached up with a gesture of swift tenderness and touched his cheek. "Forgive me, if I spoke crossly; I spent a bad night, and when I saw the portrait, it seemed alive, and I couldn't bear its eyes. It was as though Owen were mocking me, as he used often to mock me when I did anything that was weak." She paused again and shuddered. "He was a terrible man, Louis. Let's forget him, utterly; that's the only way in which you and I can be happy together."

Though the other events of the evening were blurred in Du Lhut's mind, the memory of that speech remained with phonographic accuracy, and he often reverted to it during the week which followed—a week replete with the joys of perfect companionship and the promise of a closer tie in the near future, yet intangibly and illogically shadowed by a phantasmal fear bred of the past. For not even in the surrender of herself to another man was Eleanor Clymer able to follow her own dictum and forget utterly the strange and unbending personality of him who had been her husband, and ideas that had been Clymer's, phrased sometimes in Clymer's very turns of speech, cropped out in her intercourse with Du Lhut more persistently than at any former time during their friendship. At first, Du Lhut experienced fierce and unreasoning jealousy when Clymer's shrewd, heartless aphorisms, masquerading in Eleanor's quiet accents, flung the bar sinister athwart an evening's peace; but later, he came to recognize them as inevitable, and regarded them with the equanimity of acquired fatalism. If he could not have Clymer's widow without a sulphur-colored tinge of Clymer, he must make the best of it; she was good enough for him, tinge or no tinge. In this latter opinion, most men would have agreed with him, since Eleanor Clymer was a woman among women—beautiful, yet not too beautiful; good, but not overgood. Furthermore, she was interested in Du Lhut's interests, and had known him, and been in sympathy with him, a long time, so that

she was not likely to feed water to his weaknesses, nor vinegar to his strength. The artist, as the days went by and the weeks lengthened into a month, managed gradually to shelve Clymer and the things of Clymer into a mental niche, to be looked at only when necessary, or in the lone hours of the night, when the mind, freed of its balance-wheel, roves fantastically among the skeletons in its graveyard, and grew happy in the present and hopeful for the future, like the ordinary man in an analogous position; so it was in the nature of a blinding shock to him to receive by messenger one evening just at twilight a letter from Eleanor which ran as follows:

MY DEAREST LOUIS: I've been trying all day to put into words the things I have to say to you, and have found the task so difficult that I've torn up some dozen drafts, and am making this last effort helter-skelter, exactly as the thoughts come. I'm afraid I never was cut out for a letter-writer.

Perhaps I had better begin with the flat statement that I can't marry you, and have it out. I wish I could soften the words somehow; they sound so cruelly harsh. But I can't, and the poor best I can do is to give you my reason. Even that is hard enough, because although the cause of my refusal is perfectly clear to me, I find trouble in stating it in such a way that it will be clear to you.

Louis, I am afraid of Owen. I don't exactly fear that he is alive, so much as I fail to believe him dead. He was so powerful, so tenacious of life! To think of his body bereft of its spirit is like imagining the sea without motion. And even if his body has succumbed to the Inevitable, I must still believe his spirit in existence, and reckon with it.

Doubtless you think this view weak and silly. To you, Owen was no more than a man, good in some ways, bad in most, and on the whole disagreeable and to be avoided; to me, on the other hand, he had become, long before he went away, a personified Idea. I thought of him as an indomitable Force, and used to watch his struggle against obstacles with an intellectual delight which made up in a measure for the love I couldn't feel for him. Sometimes, I think that attitude of mine drove him to work when he would otherwise have been glad to rest, and thereby I did him wrong.

For the man had his lovable side, Louis. Most of the love had been squeezed out of him by the poverty and hardships of his early years, but there was a little left, and that little might have been fostered and made to grow into something that would have made him a happier man, if I had had

sense to recognize the opportunity. You will laugh and consider me a dreamer, but I'm telling you the truth, all the same.

Think of his start, and then think of what he made of himself. His mother died when he was born, and he never knew who his father was. For ten years he lived in an asylum, then ran away, and sold papers on the New York streets. From bootblack and paper boy, he rose in fifteen years to be a special correspondent who could command top prices. What a story is told in those few words! He hadn't even the capital of a name that was his own to help him. Nobody trusted him, and he trusted nobody; the trust, like the love, had been hammered out of him. During his whole life he was always the under dog, always busy "making good." When I married him, all my friends shook their heads, and I myself was doubtful. He knew it, and was so busy proving us wrong that he had no time for his own pleasure. And we called him selfish!

It's strange—don't you think?—what a difference there is in men. You all have legs and arms, and bodies, and brains, yet there the resemblance stops; whereas we women are pretty much alike, aside from our looks. (We all dance to the same tune, if the fiddler knows how to play it!) Why couldn't you have been born with Owen's power, or he have possessed more of your gentleness? Then all of my decisions would have been made easy. As things are, I have tried to walk the tight-rope between you for many years, and now that at last I must get off, find a hard fall beneath me.

No, I can't marry you, my dear. I love you, but I can't marry you. There are too many doubts in the way. If I did, we could never be happy, for between us there would always be the fear of Owen's return. I can't help it; it's there.

And yet, I think if you had not painted Owen's portrait, I should have been able to overcome that fear. I lied when I told you that I had hidden the portrait away; on the contrary, I carried it up to my own room, and have looked at it for hours every night during the past month. It is before me now, as I write, and when I raise my eyes to it from the paper, I seem to see Owen himself, and expect to hear his voice. Ah, why did you make him so real? If you had painted only the disagreeable side, the side that everybody saw, I should not have cared, for the picture would then have been merely a picture. But you let the man behind the mask creep in—the man that I alone knew, the man who, despite his callousness and bitter self-sufficiency, had need of me—and I cannot get over the notion that this man still exists. I failed him, then; I mustn't fail him when he comes again. For come again, I am sure he will, as the eyes of the portrait seem to promise. I wonder whether, as you have so often said, the picture is not your work at all,

but Owen's, painted by your hand? It would be like him.

My poor Louis, I am more sorry than I can say, to have to write this to you. The best proof that I love you is that I couldn't muster the resolution to tell you face to face. But love isn't everything, and duty, whether real or fancied, often comes to block the wheels of desire. (That sounds laughably trite, but I can't help it.) Do your best to judge me leniently; it makes me very unhappy to cause you so much pain. Still, I am not altogether unhappy, for the thought of Owen—but perhaps it would be kinder to say no more of that. If only you had not painted the portrait, with its haunting eyes!

Du Lhut sat for a long time with the letter before him. At last he roused himself.

"It seems," he said bitterly, "that I not only painted my own obituary, but that of another. What a waste! What a waste! . . . Well, let us write *Finis* to the story."

Time proved him right, so far as the things of this world are concerned, at least; for Clymer never came back.



IN THE FALL O' YEAR

By Thomas S. Jones, Jr.

I WENT back an old-time lane
 In the Fall o' year;
 There was wind and bitter rain,
 And the leaves were sere.

Once the birds were liting high
 In a far-off May;
 I remember, you and I
 Were as glad as they.

But the branches now are bare
 And the lad you knew
 Long ago was buried there—
 Long ago, with you!



"JACK says Dobson is a particular friend of his."
 "Well, he may be a friend, but he can't be very particular."



"WHY does Mrs. Seaman always live in a hotel?"
 "Because she is so fond of all the comforts of home."

THE ITCHING PALM

By Gouverneur Morris

AT length, after a hot scramble, we reached the ravine—a narrowing of the so-called river which skirts my farm and finally cuts across it; a shady place with steep, smooth banks, well grown with shiny laurel and feathery hemlocks; beeches, too, and green falls of fern. After rains there is a fine rushing past of water, and even in cold Winter the climate is serene, and invites to meditation and rest.

"I remember this well," said Prince Laniaski. "Such a place is one of Nature's last words, which she does not change. This ravine I have always thought gave McIver the strength to do what he did. It was here that he brought his temptations and shed them like old clothes. You are lucky to own something so pretty. I think you told me that you bought from Mrs. Thomas. She was glad to get the money?"

"Gladder than I to part with it," said I. "And that surprised me. I always understood that when she married she came into a large fortune—all McIver's savings."

"Yes," said Laniaski, "he brought her up with the idea that they were very poor; then when she became engaged he sprang his little surprise—all that he had saved in a nice lump of bonds. It wasn't a surprise entirely, though. Several people knew that he was saving—all he could; and when she began to grow up she had hints of it. So it wasn't altogether a surprise. Do you know the story?"

"Not the rights of it," said I.

"It was mostly wrongs," said the prince. "I will light a cigarette and tell it to you.

"You are young, married and a father. I have even heard you express the wish to save money in order to secure the future happiness of those who are dear to you. Indeed, you remind me of McIver, for what you lack in talent you make up in sanity."

"Or good luck," I suggested.

"Or good luck," said he.

"McIver married a charming girl. They had been in love for a long time, and as soon as he was able to make a nice little income by his drawing they married. She had a little money of her own—a few thousand a year—perhaps four. They were both very young and very fashionable; always on the ragged edge of money troubles; always making the dollars fly; always ecstatically happy. At the end of four years they gave a hostage to fortune—the present Mrs. Thomas. But they made no change in their way of living on that account. They gave the baby everything the babies of their rich friends and relatives were given; a day nurse and a night nurse, Irish lace and patent milk—everything, indeed, that nature can so readily dispense with. Then McIver had a long siege of typhoid; more money flew, and when the baby was a year and a half old she had a little brother and a pair of parents very much in debt.

"Still they spent, gambled with their friends, and entertained. They had yet to learn that they were in a hole. It was the boy baby's funeral expenses that brought this fact home to them. McIver told me that, years after. He said, when he realized that he had buried his son with borrowed money, life for the first time showed him a terrible face. He owned this

farm, at that time an unsalable property, and here they came to live. McIver would have no half measures. He did not even give the old farmhouse a coat of paint. He was resolved to pay what he owed in short order; so was Mrs. McIver, who, as I have said, was a charming girl.

"They did. Of course the fact of their mourning helped. Nothing was expected of them. Smart people did not then live in this vicinity. They made no effort to keep up the farm; they did not even have a horse or a housemaid. In less than a year they could see daylight through their debts. McIver drew hard, and began to realize that to have money which you do not owe is of all civilized feelings the most comfortable. But then he was blessed, beyond his wife, in a real love for quiet and nature. He had cared greatly for the artificial, because it is easy to follow a lead, and hard to give one. But having found peace, quiet and freedom from anxiety, and having actually understood—think how wonderful!—that he had found these things, he resolved never to relinquish them.

"He told Mrs. McIver. But she was not prepared to see life in that way. Gaiety she loved, and pretty clothes—not too much, perhaps, but enough to look forward to their return with a feeling akin to bliss—as one looks forward to a bath at the end of a railway journey—to a bath, and dinner and champagne. For a year or more she had played the Trojan, proudly and happily—but in the understanding that she was only playing that part with the view to an ultimate release from it.

"I can fancy her disappointment when she suggested that, being free from debt and ahead of the game, they go back to their own place, and McIver answered that what they had thought to be their own place had proved a sham and a temptation; that, having tasted the peace and ease of living within his means, he did not propose, even for a day, to resume their former follies and struggles.

I can imagine his arguments—if he argued the case; the unanswerable arguments to his wife of a husband who has made up his mind. Was he sufficient for her happiness or not? She loved him. Could she give the negative to that question? Was it fair to spend in folly money that could be laid aside for the little daughter? Was she so wanting in proper feeling as to love the town better than the beautiful, restful country?

"She was, as I have said, a charming girl. She made her choice instantly and sweetly. She said that her place and her happiness were with her husband. She would like a housemaid and a horse. Decency required them. She would not ask for anything more. She would suggest painting and papering the house, but she would not insist upon it. They would save all they could for the little daughter.

"Poor Mrs. McIver!—she was grand in those first years: a little tower of sweetness and make-believe. How she used to come to this ravine with McIver and praise it, when in her heart she hated every drop of water that flowed through it, every leaf that grew greenly on every tree. The man was sacrificing his sure treasure, his heart's heart, for that doubtful treasure, that asset of problematical advantage, that hot-bed of the ingratitude (possibly), his child.

"But she seemed a sweet enough child, and she was pretty, God knows. She's still pretty—as pretty as her mother was. She ran wild, she rejoiced in wild things. She was given to understand at an early age that her parents were poor, had just enough by management on which to scrape along. She didn't care nor repine. A willow whistle she had, a jack-knife with half a blade, enough warm clothes to keep her from the cold; a father who never scolded or beat; a mother whose eyes swam with love, and—perhaps—pity.

"That mother died. With her last breath she told McIver that he had been good to her, that she worshiped

him and blessed him; that he had made her happy—so happy.

"But," she said (he told me this himself, poor fellow)—'but,' she said, 'it may be that some day the little daughter will want all those follies that would have made us so unhappy if we had stuck to them. It may be that she will set her heart on pretty things—on theatres, on clothes, on hansoms—on hansoms, Jim—and vanities—all the vanities. If she should want these things, you'll let her have them, won't you, dear? You can save even more, now that I am going—why, when she marries—even if she marries a poor man, you can make her rich. You'll do that, won't you, dear? Promise that when she marries you'll give her all that we've saved together, and all that you are going to save alone. You see, dear, she may want the vanities—you can't tell—she may want them. You and I have learned that vanities are vanities. But I want the little daughter to choose for herself. Most girls, you know, like the vanities, and need them. Men even like them. Do you remember you and me when we were young and foolish?'

"She was a long time dying. It was from her delirium that poor Jim McIver learned the truth. It came on her suddenly in the night when he and the nurse—he had had to come to a nurse—were watching. She sat up suddenly in her bed and cried:

"I want to be covered with flowers—hot-house flowers—not country flowers. I must be buried in lace—"

"McIver broke into his savings for the funeral. It was just as his wife would have wished; hot-house flowers, a boy choir, smart people, Grace Church and Woodlawn. But afterward he retrenched.

"It leaked out in this neighborhood, however, that Mrs. McIver had had such and such a funeral, and people began to say that McIver had more money than he knew what to do with. They began to pity the little girl and say that her father was a miser. If I have given you the idea that the McIvers lived here in complete isolation

it is a mistake. From time to time publishers, art editors and old friends who could put up with the country fare and inconveniences for old sake's sake, or for business's sake, happened in.

"I myself came quite often. I liked the McIvers. I liked fresh eggs, which you could not get in town, and warm, fresh milk, and especially I liked to shed all that was worldly, including my coat, to dig holes in the ground and set trees in them, to cut down other trees, to forest on a small scale with McIver. I am part responsible for this wood. You admire the amiable beeches—just the right distance apart—so clean and golden? McIver and I managed that they should be so. Nature had made here a little forest of bean-poles. McIver and I corrected the great mother in her profusion, and arranged for a forest of trees. Pshaw! We made a pond. We made an arbor. We repaired a wood-shed. We dug out springs; we drained swamps. We made so charming a place that it is not to be duplicated in the country—and all this without expense. I am unconscionably prolix.

"At fourteen Dolly, the little daughter, accomplished a feat of evolution and heredity possible only in America. She laid aside her wild ways; she discovered her beautiful eyes and her lovely hair. She began to make herself charming. She had found out that her father was not poor, but eccentric, that some day she would have a fortune. Somehow or other there came to her the manner of a woman born and bred to fashionable life; the manner of a rich man's daughter of marriageable age. I was her first flirtation. When she had subdued me, she confided in me. It was then that I began to be sure that poor McIver had established many links in an ultimate tragedy.

"Uncle Lani," said she, 'is it true that papa and I live this way because he wants to, and not because we have to? Lots of people have told me that he's really rich. Is he?'

"How do I know?" said I.

"Thank you," said she, "that's what I wanted to know."

"I believe," said I, "that he has a little money laid by."

"A little?" said she.

"Just a little. Perhaps enough to make you more comfortable when you are older," I said.

"I'd like to be more comfortable now," said she.

"Then," said I, "think about the future. That is what has made me comfortable all my life. But then, I belong to the Roman Church."

"You think," said she, "that I ought not to strike papa for any of it now?"

"Precisely," I said; "when you marry will be time enough."

"I have heard," said she, "that he means to give me the money when I marry."

"If I tell you that he does," said I, "will you promise me something?"

"Tell me," she said, "and I will promise."

"Well," I said, "he does. And now you must promise me that you will never let your father know that you have known anything about the matter. He, Dolly, was by nature a great spender. For many years now he has denied himself everything but the necessities for your sake. He has worked hard. He has done a few cartoons that will be remembered. And he has kept putting away money and investing sanely, so that when you are of the right years you shall have everything that you want."

"I was a fool," said Laniaski, "to admit any knowledge of McIver's affairs to his daughter. Still, under the circumstances, it was difficult to lie. And I hoped to do good. I hoped to keep her from pestering McIver."

"Like all young and ardent persons, she began to build castles, whole feudalisms in the air—all on the strength of the fortune that was to be hers. Smart people began to buy and build in this neighborhood, and Dolly McIver became a great belle. Her father allowed her a few decent clothes and a pony. His name and position opened all the doors for her. Nor

was the story that when she married she would come into a large fortune in any way a bar to her progress.

"I will not speak of her beauty, which was complete and excellent, a wonder-working beauty on men and women. She was carried off to Newport, to the Mediterranean, to houses on upper Fifth avenue—everywhere that money could give her delight. But it was a great pity that she expected to be rich. If she had had no expectations she would have made a rich marriage with one of the Montgomeries. She liked him. He was mad about her. But Thomas, a charming fellow, though poor, was her final choice.

"I was not in this country at the time of the wedding, but I stopped with McIver shortly afterward. I found him greatly changed; a bitter, unhappy and old man—no longer reticent about his affairs, but eager to unfold them, and bitter in the process.

"What is the matter with you?" I said, when we had been together a few hours. "Your disposition is grown sour."

"Reason enough," said he; "I have made a mess of three lives."

"What nonsense!" said I.

"I know now," he replied, "that my wife was made desperately unhappy by living in this damned hole. I think it killed her."

"Her happiness," I said, "was to be with you."

"Companionship, even with the nearest and dearest, is only the mast of happiness," McIver remarked. "With a woman there is all the rest of the rigging to be thought of—pretty things and vanities, the mainstays which hold erect the mast. When she was dying she called for hot-house flowers, not country flowers, and lace on her shroud. But I—so that we could lay aside money for the little daughter—had made her walk in cotton and sleep in cotton. I denied her all the little follies and graces that make life charming to a woman. So I spoiled her life, and now that I know it—mine."

"'But,' I said, 'at least Dolly is happy in her husband and in her money.'

"'Dolly happy?' said McIver. 'Oh, man, if you knew the glow of pride with which I called to her on her wedding morning and showed her the bonds—two hundred and fifty of them—a clean ten thousand a year.'

"'I had no idea you had saved so much,' said I.

"'And Dolly,' said McIver, 'it seems had no idea that I had saved so little. Oh, she was very nice and affectionate about it, but I could see—God help me, I could see.'

"'Not long after,'" said Laniaski, "McIver was found dead under a great tree which he himself had felled. The place is further along in these very woods. I was staying with him, and, by good chance, Dr. Bree. We were the ones that found him. He went out one morning, taking his axe. Lunch-time came, but no McIver. We waited an hour; then we went to look for him. He was, as I have said,

caught under the tree. But he was not crushed; no bone was broken. Indeed, there was not a mark on his body, and presently we found among the leaves, and buried deeply, a little bottle that contained chloral."

"Then, prince," said I, "your advice to a young married man who has given a hostage to fortune is *not* to save, *not* to live within his means, *not* to look ahead?"

"Saving," said Laniaski, "is laudable only when it is difficult. It is then more than laudable. It is noble and heroic. When it ceases to be difficult, when it becomes easy and a pleasure—as with poor McIver—nay, when it becomes a passion, then it is, perhaps, of all the devil's ingenuities to undo mankind, the most devilish, because it is the most selfish."

"Well," said I, and I sighed, "you may tell my wife, with my compliments, that if she asks me so much as once more for a new station wagon, she shall have it."



LOVE AND GOLD

By Frank L. Stanton

I

GOLD is the dream forever—so is the story told.
With a strong man's arms to necklace you, what do you want with gold?
Would your heart beat more in music 'neath silken raiment fine?
Let me lack gold long if I sing this song, "The woman I love is mine!"

II

I make no doubt, my dearie, Life's joys seem wind-blown dust
When the gleam o' gold comes glitterin' to a cabin an' a crust;
Would there be more stars in heaven—more blossoms on the vine?—
Death to the dream forever if the woman I love is mine!

III

All the wealth I'm a-wantin' is here, to have an' to hold—
This arm that circles the waist of you, swept by your tresses of gold;
An' this be my song forever in shadowland an' shine:
"The woman I love is mine for aye—the woman I love is mine!"

THE GOD-GHOST

By Theodosia Garrison

I KNOW that Pan is dead, yet now
Along the river's darkling edge
I saw the slender, silver sedge
As 'neath a fleeting footstep bow;

And this red lily from its stem
Snapped suddenly and broke and fell,
What time some hand invisible
Stirred through the myriad blooms of them.

And there I saw the river break
In gentle ripples, circling wide,
As though some long-dead naiad sighed
Beneath it for old loving's sake,

And fain would rise again and greet
Her goat-hoofed lover as he came
Beneath the clustered trees, aflame
To pipe his longing at her feet;

Where black against the rising moon
The mad Bacchante's wine-splashed crew
Hailed them as mates of theirs and drew
Them captive by the wide lagoon.

I know that Pan is dead. I know
In what strange fashion was his death,
And how amazement gripped his breath
Who fell before an unknown foe,

What time across the trembling green,
Against the veiled and quaking sun,
Sounded from Calvary that one
Torn death-cry of the Nazarene.

I know that Pan is dead. His host
Are as blown leaves the winds abhor;
Yet who shall say that nevermore
Walks upon earth his homeless ghost?

Where else were place for him who hath
No soul to whine at heaven's gate;
No soul to crush beneath the weight
Of Lucifer's exquisite wrath?

Goat-hoofed, earth-smear'd, he may not climb
 Where those great gods, who mocked their fall,
 Sit in a silence cynical
 Awaiting their appointed time.

Only for him the earth—the earth
 That was his mother and his spouse;
 Who hailed him royal in her house,
 And waited on his love and mirth.

Wherefore he comes to her again
 In the green silences, I know.
 Tonight I watched her forests glow,
 And felt her blissful tears of rain.

Behold, great Pan is here, for hark!
 Not that the river's murmurings
 Or moon-awakened bird that flings
 A note of gold against the dark.

Hark! For tonight the ghost of Pan
 Shrills from his slender river-rods
 The mockery that is a god's,
 The suffering that is of man:

Man's wailing sense of impotence,
 The protest of the bruised clods,
 Meet with the note that shows a god's
 Contemptuous indifference.

My thoughts are tangled in the strain.
 Not mine to trace the 'wilder'd thread;
 I only know that Pan is dead,
 I only know he lives again;

And so will live until down-hurled
 Creation crashes from its course,
 And some malignant, maddened force
 Shrieks as it views what was a world.



FLIM-FLAMMED

BEULAH—When he asked for a kiss and you told him he could have just the one, how did he come to take so many?

ALMA—Pshaw! A man knows a woman hasn't any head for figures.

THE SELFISH WOMAN'S HOUSE O' DREAMS

By Eleonora Robertson

WHEN the Selfish Woman was a little girl she was a good deal uglier than the ugliest child you ever saw. And her mother hated her because she was so ugly, but chiefly she hated her because she was so like her father. (Why the mother hated the child for being like its father is another story and does not belong here. This does not necessarily imply a "without benefit of clergy" affair—there may be worse tragedies in matrimony than out of it.) And the child knew that her mother hated her, and she knew, too, that her mother loved her sister, who was beautiful and fair. Why this should be so her child-mind could not fathom, but it was one of the things that went toward the making of a Selfish Woman of her.

Those were hard, poverty-stricken days, when she was a little girl, and things seethed and fermented in her little narrow bosom, filling her soul with unrest and rebellion. And as she grew old enough to know, her own ugliness was to her, perhaps, the bitterest of all the bitternesses that her passionate, beauty-loving, luxurious nature could know. How she hated her dark skin and thin, narrow face and scrawny body! How she loathed her long, bony, claw-like hands and pipestem arms and all the ugly angularity and awkwardness of her long, overgrown length of limbs! And when she thought of these things her somber, brooding eyes burned red from the inward fires of rage and rebellion that were consuming her, and her little dark, thin face, witch-like in its leanness and sharpness, would grow actually fiendish in the intensity of her soul's hatred of herself. And all this helped, too, to make her a Selfish Woman.

There were lots of other things as well—the want of love in her life, the narrow poverty and galling meannesses of her surroundings, and the less than half-concealed dislike and ridicule of her school companions—all this went toward the hardening of her heart against all the world and to the making of her heart one of the unhappiest that ever beat in a child's bosom.

But, in spite of all these things, the ugly child was not wholly comfortless as her intellect began to mature, for, unknown to those around her, verses and stories began to come from her queer, lonely, battling young soul, old long past her years, which in time actually brought her an occasional dollar or so. And these few dollars oftenest were spent on a bunch of violets or a rose, if it were at the season when they were most expensive, or perhaps a foolish, dainty, silk nightgown. And robed in this, or with her flowers beside her in her lonely, bare, cold room, she would dream hours away, reveling in the sense of luxury which these unpardonable extravagances brought to her. It was her own money, she boldly made answer to her but faintly protesting conscience, and if she chose that her body should go cold or hungry for the sake of these luxuries for her soul, it was her own affair.

And when she was alone she conjured things out of the tinpanny old piano that was in the house, that lifted her far above her unhappy mortal self, into a dream-world that only her own soul knew of; and in these brief whiles she loved herself, for she knew then that there was a beauty in her Self, that her sister or her mother, or any of those who laughed at her or disliked her, would never know in their own souls.

So that, little by little, as she grew into herself, she began to know how to value the things that were her real self, and though she did not grow less intolerant of her outward ugliness, it was forced oftener into the background of her consciousness now.

And then, just as though it might have happened in a story, things which were the belated outcome of the reason of her mother's hatred of her ugly child began to happen. A grandfather died and left her some money, and a little later a millionaire uncle died and left her a good deal more money; so that at last she was independent. She would never again want for the necessities of life, and many luxuries would be hers without labor and without care. And so she went away from her mother and sister and went to school, and in a few years a great university conferred upon her the honor of adding several letters of high degree to her name. After that she hated herself still less, and daily grew more selfish of herself and more hard and indifferent to the world.

And now she was nearly thirty years old, and at last had come gradually but surely into her own in more than financial or intellectual things. For, out of the ugly chrysalis of her childhood and young girlhood, she had developed into a strangely beautiful woman—a woman that you couldn't get past without looking at twice, and as many more times as you got a chance to.

She was nearly six feet tall, and thin enough to make even the then very-much-in-vogue Christie woman look coarse and beefy. And somehow she had grown naturally into quantities of soft, thin silks, and much real old lace, and huge bunches of violets. And somehow you knew that the things underneath her gowns were all silk, too, and that there was more real lace where it did not show than where it did. And she piled her heavy, black hair into a coronal on top of her small head, which made her look several inches taller still; and her sleeves fell far down over her thin, long, once-hated hands, so that only

tapering finger-tips with exquisitely polished nails gleamed occasionally through the lace and fluff. And there were such quantities of thin silk in her gowns that sometimes fell straight all around her, clinging lovingly to her long, thin limbs, revealing the daintiest of curves and graceful lines of scarce-believable length; and at other times she seemed to nestle down into the silky voluminousness of her gowns, like a bee into the petals of a rose.

Her neck was long and slender and brown, and she wore wide collars of lace falling away from it low at her throat, revealing all of its length and slimness. The voluptuousness of her full scarlet lips seemed ever to be battling for the ascendancy over the cold, hard, indifferent expression that had grown to be their usual wont; while the still passion in her fathomless eyes seemed ever ready to flame into life, and yet always waited—and waited.

For a short season the smart set of a big city raved over her—her absolutely unique type of beauty, her originality of dress, the daring emphasis of her length and slimness, which defied all of Fashion's deceptions—but more than all, the mysterious baffling charm of her personality, that, strange to say, was oftener repellent than winning in manner, and yet attracted again and again. Of course, all this popularity and petting which became hers was doubtless partly due to the fact that the widow of the millionaire uncle who had remembered her in his will introduced her into this particular society. But there was no doubt also that her triumph was chiefly her own.

She had two or three desirable offers of marriage at this time, but she had grown to think pretty well of herself then, and was now a thoroughly self-satisfied Selfish Woman. She cared for no one, and did not care whether anyone cared for her.

But she loved solitude more than anything else in the world except herself, and so after two months of

the fêting and flattery of society, she fled to the Northern wilderness, where in a little dead mining-town she had an aunt who happened to be the wife of "the Company's" physician. And into this barren, broken-backed place of desolation she carried her soft silks, and old laces, and bunches of violets, fresh twice a week from the city, and her supreme selfishness, and found the last thing that she was looking for or wanted—which was Love.

It was just before this that I found her, many years after our childhood days together. For when the parting of our ways came at that time she was at that age when she hated herself and all the world most, just before she began to come into her own. And in truth, at that time I was glad to go away from her, for I was afraid of her and afraid for her. I was a timid, unknowing child myself then, of no help to her, and glad to escape from the sight of her tragic misery.

Often in the years that followed I had thought of her, wondering what life had beaten out of her, or beaten into her, half-hoping always that I would never know, for the thought of misery and tragedy always haunted me in connection with her. When at last I came across her again, it was with as much relief as surprise that I found her the epitome of a self-satisfied, self-absorbed Selfish Woman, living in much ease and luxury her absolutely self-centered and self-loving existence.

It happened to be the Summer-time, and she was living alone in her cottage beside a Northern lake, miles away from everyone else, and absolutely content in her solitude. At last, much to my surprise and very considerable gratification—for in my soul I knew she was worth while—I was invited to share it with her.

She proved a great relief to me at that particular moment of my life, for we never talked when we did not want to, and never minced words with each other when we did talk, and often for days together we lived our separate lives, side by side, as much

apart from each other as though there were miles between us. It was thus I grew to know something of the Selfish Woman. And one day I told her that she was the most absolutely selfish woman, and lived the most absolutely selfish life, of any human being I had ever known.

"Oh, I grant you that," she readily admitted. "But what of it?"

For a moment I was speechless at the appalling depravity of such an answer.

Then I shrugged my shoulders with mild indifference. "That's true," I answered lightly. "What of it?"

She was somewhat taken aback at that.

"You don't think I count for much in the world, do you?" she said.

"Do you?" I answered.

She knew she was caught. "Well, I count for a good deal to myself, anyway."

"Oh, I see that," I briefly replied. Then we both smiled.

"Well, I don't pretend to be anything but selfish," she said.

"It's a good thing. You wouldn't be a very successful pretender," I remarked.

"Why should I be anything to anybody?" she defended herself, though I was surprised that she should deign to do so. "Has anybody ever been anything to me?"

"They might have been."

"But not when I wanted and needed them most. A little love and care would have been a very good thing to me in my childhood days. You know how much I received. And I lived it out. Now I don't need anyone's love or care. I am satisfied with myself."

There did not seem to be any reply to make to this, so I changed the subject.

"You have been a pretty lucky girl, after all," I said. "Your coming into that money as you did was just like a fairy-story. Those two old men must have cared for you some, anyway."

"If they did they never showed it until they were dead," she retorted. "And I'm glad they are dead," she

added coolly. "All this," glancing around the luxuriously furnished room in which we sat, "means a good deal to me. I can't have diamonds or an automobile, but you see what I do have."

"But don't you ever really get lonesome, in spite of all this?" I asked. "These things are awfully nice as far as they go, but they are not—not human." There were some far-away baby memories tugging at my heart-strings just then.

"Lonely?" she echoed scornfully. "I *hate* people. I am perfectly contented with myself and the things that are in me. Oh, I wouldn't give up my freedom, what you are pleased to call 'loneliness,' for King Edward's throne! I love this solitude—these silent forests, this lonely lake, the very desolation of it all I love, because it means that I am alone——"

She paused abruptly, but after a moment went on again.

"I don't bother to explain these things to other people because I have never met anyone who I thought could quite understand me in this respect, except yourself. But I knew as soon as I saw you what was the matter with you—you were simply suffering from too much people. And you know," she went on almost feverishly, "that being with other people for long at a time seems to sap all my vitality, leaving me quite limp. I think I know just how a basin of water feels when somebody drops a sponge into it, only the illustration is a poor one, for no one is ever the gainer for my loss."

"I suppose some of us are built that way more than others," I conceded. "I know that I, at least, understand what you mean. It seems as though some of us have so much less to give than others, and what we do give seems to take so much more out of us, and with so little advantage, as far as we can see, to others. Still, though, like you I love solitude, yet I am far from contented with myself. I want so much and have so little to give. But it is the worth-while people like yourself, the people who really have something

in them that is worth giving to the world, and that the world would be the better for, who have no right to live such a narrow, self-centered, self-keeping life as you do. It is a sin to waste such material as there is in you."

"But is it a waste of material if I succeed in making my own life contented, even if I don't help anyone else? How many people are there in the world, do you think, who are contented with themselves? Wouldn't they be a great deal happier if they were?"

"In a way, I suppose so. But there are few people comparatively who have so many resources in themselves as you have. And when you have so much, surely you ought to give some of it to others."

"Well, what, for instance, then? Merely for the sake of argument," she added, with a smile.

"Your music, your verses, your stories," I answered, for it had come out in our talks together that she had given up writing altogether since her accession to fortune, and no one ever heard her music but herself.

"But why should I do any of these things? I don't need the money that they might bring, so why shouldn't I content myself with enjoying what other people write or play, instead of expecting other people to enjoy what I write or do?"

"For your own self-respect, then, if for no other reason," I retorted coldly.

She did not resent it. "I suppose there is something in that, or would be for some people. But I assure you, I am not lacking in self-respect. I think a good deal of myself, if the truth were told."

"And you have reason to think a good deal of yourself for what is in you, though the Lord gave you that, so after all it is no credit to you. What you do with it or don't do with it is what will count to your credit or otherwise in the end."

"Now, my dear, you must stop that at once," she interposed. "I won't have you exerting yourself in your efforts to do something for me—for two reasons. One is that I am past

redemption, and the other is that you came here to rest, and rest you must. I shall not worry myself, or you either, trying to do anything for you, and I don't ask anything of you—you pitiful little wreck of humanity, you! But you are looking better than you did when you came," she added, "and if you just get some more of this blessed solitude into you, you'll soon be all right. It is the only medicine you need."

I knew she was right. "I am very grateful to you for all this," I said. "It is a blessed solitude, and you are so restful. You don't worry me a bit. You are never here when I don't want you, and you are always here when I do want you."

She smiled at me rather quizzically. "So you see even an absolutely selfish woman has her little place in the big scheme of things, after all," she said, and then left me. Suddenly I found myself feeling a good deal ashamed of myself.

And so the dear, restful Summer days and nights slipped away. There were occasionally one or two people who came out from the broken-backed mining-town to our retreat—her aunt and the doctor, and a man or two, and a delicate-looking little tired woman, whom it made me tired just to look at, she was so worn and thin and worried-looking. She came oftener than the others. The aunt and the doctor came, I think, principally to see that their niece was still alive in her wilderness home, and had not been gobbled up by bears or Indians; and at first it did not occur to me to wonder why the man or two came. They didn't seem to count, some way, and I always hid myself when anybody came.

But I wasn't altogether blind. When one has been through things oneself one sees more quickly than those who haven't. And so gradually I became aware that the Selfish Woman was fighting a battle—a battle against Love. And who ever knew a woman to win in a battle against Love?

But she had been selfish so long now that she did not want to love even

Love, for Love might drive out Self from her heart, and she wanted to love only her Self. And so for a long time she fought against Love and sought to satisfy her soul with the delights of luxuries imported into this Northern wilderness at fearful expense to one of her limited means. All the newest music and the latest books, and violets every day now from the city, she lavished upon herself in an insanity of selfish determination to love only her Self.

"I don't need anyone but myself," she said again and again during these days, trying to drag this thought in apropos of almost every subject that we spoke upon. It was not to convince me that she said this, for she did not know then that I knew what had come to her; but it seemed that by saying this aloud again and again she was struggling to hold fast to her one-time conviction that this was really so.

It was rather pitiful to see this strong, self-contained woman battling thus against her own heart. But I did not feel a bit sorry for her, for I thought she was the most absolutely and hopelessly Selfish Woman I had ever known. Therefore I took a brutal satisfaction in hurting her all I could.

"Why, of course you don't need anyone but yourself," I would answer her. "What could you possibly gain by being anything to anybody, or allowing anybody to be anything to you? There would be nothing in such an arrangement for you. You are entirely sufficient unto yourself."

And then a look of pain would come into her eyes as she would glance somewhat wonderingly into mine, and her lips would open as though to protest, and then close quickly again without uttering a word.

"Aren't you getting a little reckless?" I said to her one day, as a huge box of violets, a package of new books and music, and some other extravagant little trifles were left at our door.

She turned on me almost fiercely. "Why shouldn't I have these things if I want them? I have nothing else

to care for. Why shouldn't I have them?"

"Why, of course, have them, my dear, if you *want* them," I answered, with a mild emphasis on the "want."
"You are lucky indeed to be able to have the things that satisfy you."

But little by little our conversation began to take for granted the things which she did not actually tell me, but which, nevertheless, I knew.

"When I ask myself what do I gain and what do I lose by marrying," the Selfish Woman said one day, "I find that I *know* the losses, but the gains, if there are any, do not seem to materialize in my imagination at all. I know that I lose my precious freedom, my many hours each day of blessed solitude, without which I should simply go all to pieces; my absolute freedom of choice to do or not to do whatever it may happen to be. And what do I gain? I don't know. Can you tell me?"

But I was too disgusted with this absolutely selfish view of the situation to attempt to make any answer.

"Has it ever occurred to you to ask yourself what the Man would gain by marrying you?" I asked her.

She shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, that is his affair. He must surely expect the gain to be greater than the loss, or he would not have asked me to marry him."

"If he is the Man I think he is, I do not believe any reckoning of loss or gain has come into his thoughts in regard to this. Oh, Selfish Woman," I cried in desperation of her wilful blindness, "don't you know that when you *give* love, no less than when it is given to you, it is all gain, gain, gain—uncounted eternal gain? If you cannot see it this way, then for your own soul's sake, drop all thought of it forever. I tell you, love does not mean all taking—the most blessed part of love is *giving*. That is love's highest privilege, its noblest end."

And at that the Selfish Woman was silent for some moments. But presently she returned to the subject, quite ignoring my last words.

"To tell you the truth," she said, "I don't really know whether I want that little home with him that we talked of or not; or whether just imagining that I want it is enough to satisfy me. Sometimes I think I could be quite as happy, perhaps happier, living in my House o' Dreams in my imagination all my life than I could be in reality."

I looked at her and shook my head. "You are too complex for me," I said helplessly.

And sometimes when she talked in such a strain as this I could not but wonder to myself if she were quite sane—if the starvation and rebellion of her childhood days, and later, these many years of solitude and absolute absorption of Self, had not in some measure affected her reason. But at other times she was so restfully normal, so pure and healthy-minded, and so delightfully reasonable and sane in her views of men and things, that she seemed as near perfection, morally and intellectually, as it is possible for a human being to become. But a mental and moral perfection is a long way from a perfect womanhood. And the Selfish Woman seemed to lack entirely those most necessary attributes to a womanly woman—love and sympathy and pity. And because of this she seemed to me like a beautiful, sexless, soulless thing, perfect as such a creature could be perfect, but not a Woman.

And then one day there came a moment in the Selfish Woman's life—ah, who can tell whence it comes, or how it comes, this supreme moment of the surrendering of the heart and soul of a woman into the keeping of a man?—when she, too, surrendered to love. And when her surrender did come, it was complete, full, all-yielding and all-giving. And the Man was one worthy to receive such a surrender; a noble victor he was, a generous conqueror. And I, a silent onlooker, saw that the sane, still love of a matured man and woman is the sweetest thing in all the world. No "Love's young dream," passing sweet as it may be, can compare with this

quiet, restful, soul-satisfying love that comes to a man and a woman who have lived enough of life to have learned that the greatest thing in all the world is love, and to know how to receive and cherish this great gift, when at last it comes to them.

And they were so happy—these two. There had been little love in either of their lives in the past, and now they both received it with thankful, reverent hearts, cherishing it as a thing sacred, setting them apart from and above all things but the best.

But, unhappily, the Man didn't own a thing in the world but a family crest and an honorable name. The few dollars he earned from day to day did not count, for he had to spend them to live as soon as they were earned. And a man cannot marry a woman under these conditions, least of all a woman who has enough to keep herself better than he could. And the Selfish Woman realized this quite as fully as the Man did. Of course, being a woman, even though she was a selfish woman, she had reasoned it out this way—that by giving up her violets and worrying along with several yards less yearly of old lace and real silk she and the Man could live comfortably enough on what she herself had. But some way she couldn't think of the Man descending to this; and she knew, too, that she would never dare suggest it to him.

And then the time came that my holiday was at an end, and little by little the story of the Selfish Woman's House o' Dreams was unfolded to me in her letters that came to me in my Southern home. Once she wrote:

You don't know what fun we are having building our future home (on paper) and furnishing it (on air). Ah, me, what a House o' Dreams it is! Will it ever come true, I wonder? Sometimes it seems that it would be to me one of those things that are too good to be true in this world. How could I ever have doubted that I wanted it! But in my innermost heart I never really doubted that I wanted it, only I was proud and self-satisfied, and I did not want to give in—and I believe you knew that, my friend, in spite of all my scornful words and blatant expressions of doubt. But it is a long, long way off yet—there are prospects, to be sure—but prospects, especially mining prospects,

won't build anything more substantial than castles in the air.

I tell you, my friend, when an English gentleman has lived all his life in independent idleness, and then is suddenly thrown out in the world at the age of forty to shift for himself, it seems as though there is some truth in that legend that the gods make sport of mortals for their own selfish amusement—for such things are certainly no joke to us. You see, engineering happened to be a fad of the Man's in his sheltered days, and that is how he drifted out here when he was no longer anchored and had to drift somewhere; and solitude happened to be a fad of mine, and that is how I drifted out here, and that is how we drifted together. Isn't it funny how things come about! To think that he has been loafing the greater part of his life away in solitary ease and luxury, in far-away England, and I have been loafing a big share of mine away in selfish solitude here—and at last we have found each other—but alas, only when the sun is getting so low in the west in our lives, and now, oh, how passionately we would both hold it back! Oh, we don't want to get old until we have tasted together something of the best of life—until our little House o' Dreams is builded, and we have lived in it together. Just a little while we ask—only a year if the gods will not grant us more. Dear God! only a day—and it seems to me sometimes that only for that day we could both say, "I am satisfied."

Ah, my friend, if we were both younger, we could afford to wait, couldn't we? But when a man has passed forty, and a woman has passed thirty, it seems as though we must make every day count for a year.

Two or three months passed before she wrote again:

No, there is nothing better than just prospects yet. That is why I have not written. I have been waiting, hoping that surely soon I should have good news to tell you. Only this—there is something looming up in the dim distance, perhaps even the near future, that looks very like something more than prospect. But I shall not weary you with details until I know definitely.

But do you know, my friend, when I look around this dead, hopeless town (I am back here now for the Winter, you know), and see so many to whom even prospects mean so much more than they do to the Man and myself—men here with wives and families, who must live; some of them with beautiful young daughters, just at the age when they want the pleasant, happy things of life, oh, so much—the things that youth craves so passionately, so eternally hopefully—why, then I feel as though the Man and I do not count; that two old people like ourselves, who have left all that behind us, should step aside and leave to them the little that there is.

And yet, if the Man does not grasp this opportunity, that is almost surely coming to him, he may wait years and years for another. He has waited years for this one, and oh, years mean so much to us now. Years, do I say? Days, even hours, count at our age! And when I say these thoughts to him, he understands. They have been in his own heart before I have spoken them. And he says, "Had I only myself to think of I could afford to step aside and let the others take what there is; but I have *you* to think of now. It would not be fair to you. It would not be fair to myself. Surely I, as well as the others, have a right to live, and it is my duty to live for you—"

And how my heart loves him for these words! And he *has* a right to live, we both have—he for me and I for him. And his has been such a lonely, loveless life. It seems now as though I must make up to him for all that he has missed out of his life in the past. I want him to be happy. Oh, I want happiness for him more than I want it for myself. We are both lonely—it seems as though we have both been left over in the Big Problem of Things—odd numbers, as it were, and now that we have found each other we need to be *added together* to find the answer. We have neither of us found it alone. And if he lets this opportunity go past him now, he will have to drift out into the big, lonely world again—whence, or to what anchorage, only God knows. And we are neither of us young. That is the tragedy of it all—that we haven't time to wait. Ah, why do things hurt so—the things that have so much sweet in them? I want so to make his happiness, to *be* his happiness. You used to scold me for my selfishness, because I would not give of my talents to others; but oh, my friend, that was only the least of my sins of omission. To give of myself—of love and sympathy and comfort—surely these are better things to give.

Ah, well, what will be the end of it, we do not let ourselves think. And so we go on happily building our blessed little House o' Dreams—still on paper, and gaily furnishing it—still on air. But oh, the love that prompts its building is not a dream, but a real, living, vital thing, that must surely, surely satisfy, even though it never has any other home than in our hearts.

And so the Winter passed away, and once more the Summer drove me northward. And the Selfish Woman received me again into her cottage, as though I had never left it.

"Yes, the managership is the Man's now, for the taking," the Selfish Woman replied in a hard, forced tone that made me glance quickly up at her, in answer to my first question, for it seemed as though I had grown to be as deeply

interested in this House o' Dreams of my two friends as though it were for myself.

And then, before we had time to say more, the little tired woman who used to come so frequently to our house the Summer before came in. After she was gone I spoke fretfully to the Selfish Woman, for I was impatient of the interruption and selfish of her company.

"I wish that little tired woman wouldn't come here," I said. "It makes me weary and half-sick just to see her—such a pathetic little creature she is. What does she come for?"

A look of pain stabbed through the Selfish Woman's eyes—such wistful, waiting eyes they were now.

"God knows I wish she wouldn't come," she answered, with an intense voice that suddenly awakened me to a sense of tragedy impending—though what it was I did not know. "If I did not see her—if I did not know so well what it means to her—if I could forget all but our two selves and our little House o' Dreams—our little House o' Dreams—"

The Selfish Woman's voice broke and ended in a quickly suppressed moan that tore at my very heart-strings.

And so it all came to me—how the husband of the little tired woman wanted the managership, too—and it lay between him and the Man. And the Selfish Woman knew, and the Man knew, too, what it would mean to this husband, and to the little tired woman, and to their young daughters, if he did not get it.

And the little tired woman was bearing her burden of suspense and waiting bravely—as she had borne all the past years of poverty and hard work and broken hopes. She did not come to the Selfish Woman with any harrowing tale of woe, or any prayer that the Selfish Woman should ask the Man to give up the coveted prize, for she did not know what the Selfish Woman and the Man were to each other—they had guarded the secret of their love well, until the prospects should become a reality. But the

pathos and tragedy of the little tired woman's life were written in her worn, patient face, more plainly than any words could tell it.

And so, for days and nights the Selfish Woman fought her battle—for the battle was hers to win or lose. The Man had left it in her hands alone. If she said to him, "Take this. It belongs to us," he would take it. If she said, "Leave it. It is not for us," he would do that also. And the Man's face was very white and still these days when he came to the Selfish Woman, and his words were few. He would make his moan to none but God and his own soul.

And for myself, it seemed to me that I should die for pity of the Selfish Woman—her strong soul battling night and day for this victory over Self. Ah, truly, Love had made a Woman of her! And always there was this question before her—had she the right to take this good thing out of the Man's life? Was it hers to say that he should make this sacrifice? Back and forth, over and over again, she went over the ground, and with it all her own mighty passion of love for the Man driving her to snatch her happiness to herself though it were in the face of God Himself.

And then one night the Man came to our cottage and after a time he went away. And as I passed him on the path leading to our house I saw that his face was like one dead, and he walked as one driven by a power not of himself. He was neither seeing nor hearing, and so I passed him in silence. The rest of that night and all the next day until late afternoon I did not see the Selfish Woman. But toward evening, as we sat together, silent as was so often our wont, there came a quick step on the veranda, and the little tired woman burst in upon us, breathless, almost voiceless, her eyes shining, her face young and happy and hopeful once more—all the weariness gone from her now.

"He has got it—my husband has got the managership!" she cried. "Oh, my good friend, rejoice with me—rejoice with me!"

And in a passion of happy tears she threw herself on the Selfish Woman's breast, and wept away all the agony and waiting and despair of the past, till her heart was lightened of its weary burden, and her thin little drooping shoulders straightened themselves joyfully and strongly to carry this load of happiness that had at last come to her.

And after the little tired woman was gone—I got her away as soon as I could; you see, she was so happy she did not realize she was being actually turned out of the house—the Selfish Woman and I sat for a long, long time in silence until the still, lonely, thick night of the Northern wilderness came down upon us. And then the moon rose slowly and presently looked in at our door, and its white light fell across the whiter face and still form of the Selfish Woman.

And at last, sitting there silent in the shadows, I saw her rise slowly—more tired than the little tired woman had ever been—and move wearily around the room, mechanically touching things here and there. I knew that she was neither seeing nor feeling aught that she touched. And then she came to a table and slowly turned over some books and papers that lay there.

Suddenly—something stirred her to consciousness. She was awake now, seeing and knowing all. And I looked, too, and in the bright moonlight I saw that the Selfish Woman held in her hand a paper on which was drawn, amateurishly and with many erasures and additions, the plan of a little house. For a moment the Selfish Woman looked at it with all the loving, hopeful attention and intense interest which she and the Man together had lavished upon this, their little House o' Dreams, for so many weeks and months.

Sharply a thought seemed to come to her like a blow, and under its agony the paper crushed in her clenched hand, and she sank on her knees to the floor, her proud head drooping low on her outstretched arms.

"My little House o' Dreams!" the Selfish Woman moaned. "Oh, God—my little lost House o' Dreams!"

THE INTOXICATED RUNABOUT

By Edwin L. Sabin

THE picnic party had been left far behind, out of sight and hearing. Emerging from the wood, the path skirted the top of a bank, threading the fringe of sumacs thereon, and, dipping sharply, descended to join the yellow road below. With a gay little spurt, Rita ran down the slope. She stopped short, and waited for her companion, who, with the small tin-pail swinging, plunged after.

"Isn't that the dearest runabout you ever, *ever* saw!" she whispered, with her hand upon his arm.

Cosgriff stood very still, hoping that she would not remove it; but she did. Almost opposite them, stationed at the side of the road, was an automobile runabout, patient, quiescent and apparently abandoned.

"It must be the one we heard a while ago," volunteered Cosgriff, in a low tone. "I wonder what—" but he interrupted himself. "Oho!" he said. "See them?"

He pointed. Over beyond the automobile, amidst the red clover of the gentle incline there, in the shade of a kindly elm, two men were stretched flat, their attitude of self-repudiation needing no scriptural phrase of explanation. One was face downward, his straw hat upon the back of his head; the other was face upward, his straw hat upon his nose; and the postures were unmistakable examples of cause and effect.

"Do you think they're—drunk?" whispered Rita, staring at them with horrified and curious gaze.

Cosgriff smiled indulgently.

"Very," he vouchsafed.

"Ahem!" coughed Rita experimentally.

The two figures amidst the red clover moved not.

"They can't hear us," declared Cosgriff confidentially. "Let's go over and look at their auto."

With the young lady hanging to his delighted arm, and prepared for instant retreat, they crossed over. They enviously scanned the trim, polished machine, waiting, like a faithful steed, for the word.

"I dare you!" challenged Rita, loosing his arm and facing him with sparkling eyes.

"All right," he answered. "How?"

"To go after the milk in it."

He surveyed her dubiously; then he surveyed the machine.

"It's so hot to walk," she coaxed. "That house away down the road seems to be the only one around."

As if calculatingly, Cosgriff gazed down the yellow highway, baking under the sun, writhing with the reflected heat. From the elm a locust scraped, exultant, his pæan of Summer. Beneath the elm the lax figures snored gutturally. The prospect was indeed one of warmth and inertness.

"I never was in an auto in my life," he explained.

"I've been, though," asserted Rita promptly. "I'll tell you what to do."

"I've smelled them, of course," he murmured.

"That helps," she encouraged. "You're acclimated, then. Come on," she invited, climbing nimbly aboard.

Gingerly he obeyed. He had some misgivings as to the ordained progress of the venture, but——!

"You must sit on that side where the things to work are," whispered Rita.

Cosgriff placed himself accordingly, with a species of double lever at his right hand, a wheel like a freight-car brake, only wooden and more ornate, and with bell-mouthed, looped, combination brass-and-rubber bottle arrangement attached in front of him, and under his feet a pair of corrugated pedals. He deposited his tin-pail between himself and Rita, and nervously bided her instructions.

"It doesn't seem exactly like the one that I was in," she mused. "The plan is different. I think, though," she decided, after a moment, "that you pull the biggest handle first."

She settled back, and gazed ahead.

"It's nice that we're pointed the right way," she observed. "Pull it easy, please."

The machine did not stir.

"The handle won't work," muttered Cosgriff.

"Perhaps you'd better push it, then. I may have forgotten," she suggested.

Still the vehicle remained passive, without symptom of life.

Cosgriff twisted the wheel this way and that, but brought no result until his fingers slipped, and falling upon the bottle arrangement produced an instant loud and angry "Squawk!"

"Goodness!" protested his companion, with a start.

"I should say so!" agreed Cosgriff, hastily relinquishing the wheel.

"What's the matter with the blamed thing, do you suppose?" he queried.

"Have you tried all the handles and things?" she asked anxiously.

"I've tried everything in sight," he asserted. "Everything I can get my hands or feet on."

"Do go!" pleaded Rita, urging with her slim body as when one thus impels a swing.

"Well, we—" began Cosgriff; a sudden admonitory clutch by his companion stopped him, and intuitively he glanced at the elm-tree shade.

One of the two sleepers—the one who had been on his back—was sitting up

and blinking stupidly in their direction. As he sat he gently swayed, and his eyes appeared to be unable to focus properly. He was a rather young man, but not, in his present state of watery inflammation, at all prepossessing.

"We're just trying your auto," addressed Cosgriff, conciliatory.

"Aw right; g'by," responded the young man, with an amiable wave that nearly upset him.

"We thought we'd borrow it to go to that house down the road in," piped Rita tremulously.

"Aw right; g'by," repeated the young man, desperately essaying to remove from his head a hat which was not there.

"P-pergirl, p-pergirl, p-per' pergirl," he proffered, swaying in his endeavors to doff the elusive hat. "Pergirlcan-have auto anyol'time."

"He's calling you a pretty girl," said Cosgriff aside. "He's not so very far gone after all."

"He is, too," corrected Rita severely. "He's fairly wallow-y. And anyway, every girl's pretty to a drunken man. Will you please tell him we can't make his auto go?"

"We don't seem able to start up," imparted Cosgriff to the swaying figure.

The idea, penetrating among the thick wits of that individual, appealed as the height of the ridiculous.

"Can't shtart—he-he-hic! Can't shtart, can't make'ergo, ol' m'shine b-balk-balky. Bullyf'm'shine. Can't shtart—he-he-hic!" he chuckled with sottish persistency.

"Silly thing!" scolded Rita.

"Ain' shilly," retorted the man, to her consternation. Suddenly he sobered from his risibility. "Choo choo ch-ch-ch-oo-ooooooo!" he uttered, aimlessly waving his hand like a broken flipper.

"Choo ch-ch-choooooooo!" he repeated, with considerable difficulty of enunciation.

The two in the auto looked at each other in perplexity.

"What's he driving at, I wonder?" spoke Cosgriff.

"Make 'er cho-cho-oo-oooo!" in-

sisted the man, his broken flipper wriggling with a screw-like movement.

"I know!" exclaimed Rita, springing out. "Of course! We forgot to wind it up!"

She made a half-circuit of the machine, behind, scanning it; and abruptly reaching in, at some point beneath Cosgriff, she twisted vigorously. As if she had touched a spring, the vehicle thrilled with quick, throbbing life. It began to emit "Choo's!" in an unbroken series, and vibrate like a buzz-saw. Cosgriff momentarily expected a culminating explosion, but stuck to his seat.

"Choo choo cho-chooooooo!" reiterated their mentor in the shade approvingly.

"Better get in!" warned Cosgriff Rita-ward.

She deftly embarked again.

"Now, you must move the lever," she bade breathlessly. "You see, we didn't spark up the carburetor, or something."

"That's so," confessed Cosgriff.

"Aw right, g'by," droned their well-wisher of the shade, and thereupon fell sideways into the clover and slumber.

Cosgriff cautiously pushed the large handle of the double lever. There was a convulsive movement of the vehicle under him, but in spite of all its ado it stayed in the one spot. He pushed the lever farther—too far, maybe, for in a flash the auto executed a *volte en arriere* and scuttled backward like a frightened crawfish.

"Goodness, be careful!" ejaculated Rita, grasping the edge of the seat.

Cosgriff attempted now to pull the handle—to stop, or reverse, or something, but a lurch ripped his fingers from their hold, and he frantically grabbed the steering-wheel. The auto was scurrying, backward, straight across the road. He blindly twisted the wheel—and the machine, with a violent swerve, swung at an acute angle and made for the opposite side.

"Goodness!" cried Rita. "The other way again!"

The auto, instinct with an animus diabolical, turned so sharply that, had

Cosgriff not seized her, his companion would have shot out over the tires. This left him but one hand for the steering-wheel; and to the auto it was opportunity.

One side of the road was the embankment, from the crest of which the two now in the auto recently had descended; the other side was the clover-covered slope upon which, in the elm-shade, the two unconscious forms were sprawled. The machine charged now the bank, now the slope, ignoring the smooth, level middle save as a means of communication between.

It is difficult to direct an auto dashing in reverse direction as this machine was, and particularly difficult when the helmsman is a swab, and furthermore is embarrassed by a girl who is constantly almost falling overboard—not to speak of himself having tendencies that way.

If one's belongings, from one's dog to one's desk, through perpetual association partake of one's characteristics, then here was an auto imbued with the disposition of its late occupants. It was intoxicated; it was hilariously, madly drunk.

For one pregnant moment it careened with two wheels in the ditch and the opposite two well elevated upon the bank; and anon plunging across the road it reeled wildly up the slope and down again in a circle, returning to the ditch and the embankment.

"Goodness!" gasped Rita at every gyration.

"Don't try to jump!" panted Cosgriff, pale-faced, nervous, but resolute.

His words seemed the more to infuriate the auto. With unexpected demoniac purpose it bolted across the road again, half-way up the slope, whirled abruptly as if shying at the two recumbent figures.

"Goodness!" gasped Rita, as she felt herself and Cosgriff sliding together.

Tilting upon some well-calculated obstruction, it dumped its pair of inmates to clover, sped on down and across, and stopped, facing them with its hind legs in the ditch, gazed across at them and puffed triumphant derision.

The evolutions of the runabout had taken place within a small compass both of time and space—perhaps two minutes of the former and a circus-ring of the latter. Now, of the four figures deposited in the elm-shade, only one stirred. The drunken men snored on, Rita lay with closed eyes, in a little ball, but Cosgriff staggered to his feet, and giddy from his late flight bent over her.

"Rita!" he said anxiously.

Rita neither moved nor spoke.

A fear like to a great pain gripped his heart and made it stand still. She was dead—her eyes were fast—she had broken her neck.

"Rita!" he implored, shaking her by the shoulder. "My God!" he moaned.

"Rita! Get up! Do get up! You aren't dead! Are you dead? Don't die, Rita! If you are dead, I'm dead, too! I'll—I'll drown myself, or something."

He looked excitedly about him, as if to carry out his threat; but the flowing bowl, represented by a discarded bottle, seemed the only medium available, and even it was empty.

"Rita! Darling, darling Rita! I love you, Rita! Don't you hear? Why don't you say something? Please get up, Rita!"

He peered at her frenziedly, and shook her.

"I love you, Rita. Don't die! Don't you know I love you? Oh, dear, she doesn't hear me!"

An eyelid fluttered, just the merest quiver, and he saw it.

"She's alive! She's not dead either; she's alive!" he announced hysterically to the drunken men, who remained impassive, however, to the news. "Bring some water, somebody!"

Seconding his own words, he dashed down the moderate incline, and to the ditch across the road, where, he suddenly recollected as of a dream, was a shallow residue from a recent storm.

The locust, peeping from his eyrie in the elm, to his astonishment witnessed the hitherto motionless young lady there beneath him give a surreptitious

kick, to cover an ankle, and cautiously open an eye. With an exclamation and an indignant little bounce she sat up. Cosgriff, rushing back intent upon his two hands from which a few teaspoonfuls of water were rapidly leaking, came upon her thus, and thus received, stopped short as though he had encountered an apparition.

"Rita!" he stammered, in one word expressing joy, relief, incredulity.

"Don't you dare wet me with any of that old ditch-water!" she rebuked.

"The idea!"

She patted her hair with inquiring fingers, and settled her disarranged costume.

"But I thought you were dead, Rita," faltered Cosgriff piteously, the reaction telling upon him. He surveyed his trembling hands, and parted them. The water was gone, anyway.

"I'm not; but I would have been by this time if you had sprinkled me with that dreadful stagnant stuff from the ditch," she reproved. "I would have died from lockjaw probably." Then as if fearing that she was being too severe with him, she broke into forgiving dimples. "Of course you meant all right," she said. "You're only a man. A woman would have found water that was clean."

"Are you hurt any place?" he queried, eying her.

"No, I guess not," she answered, smiling brightly.

He gazed down upon her, still with uncertainty.

"But you were so quiet, and your eyes were shut, and you wouldn't answer me, either," he accused.

"Wouldn't I?" she remarked, picking up her hat and adjusting it.

"Did you hear what I said?" he asked eagerly.

"I don't know; what was it?"

"I said——"

"That poor auto, stuck in the ditch!" she interrupted. "Just listen to it. Do go and put it out of its agony."

Cosgriff obediently investigated the runabout, which, with its hindquarters in the mud, was slipping and snorting

and pawing; and by a fortunate touch reduced it to a state of reason. Then he returned.

"Excuse me," apologized Rita.

"I said—" resumed Cosgriff.

"Excuse me again, please," she interposed; "but you ought to get your hat before some team runs over it. There it is, in the middle of the road."

"I don't see any team," objected Cosgriff, unwillingly trudging away.

"No; but one might come," she replied.

He rescued his hat, and again ascended the slope.

"I said—" he attempted.

"And the pail, too. The pail was right there, by your hat. I think perhaps you had better pick it up, if you don't mind."

Cosgriff rescued the pail and its cover, and glumly toiled back. He stood over her, mopping his face.

"If you're really not hurt, we might go on after the milk. They'll be waiting for it," he averred. "Let me help you up."

"W-well," she assented slowly.

"Or I can leave you here, while I go."

"Leave me with these two—persons?" she expostulated in alarm. "Mercy!"

"Can I help you up?" he proffered.

"W-well," she repeated more slowly. She moved; and then hesitated. "What was it we were talking about?" she asked.

"When?"

"Just now—when I interrupted."

"Nothing special, was it?" he alleged faintly.

"Maybe not," she agreed cheerfully.

"Oh, I know. It was about what you said when I didn't hear. Now, tell me."

"It's hardly worth while to repeat it," he faltered, his voice and countenance conveniently muffled by his handkerchief.

"Then it shouldn't have been said while I couldn't hear," declared Rita. "If I was to have only one chance at it, you ought to have waited."

"But I don't know as I want you to hear," confessed Cosgriff miserably.

"Then you shouldn't have said it at all," she decided. "A man ought never to say anything that he wouldn't want his mother, or sister—or any other woman to hear."

Cosgriff shuffled uneasily.

"I think," mused Rita in tentative tone, "that I did hear a tiny bit. I couldn't have been all unconscious."

"Well—what?" requested Cosgriff, from behind his handkerchief.

"Seems to me," murmured Rita, as if dragging to the fore some remote memory, "that you said—let's see; oh, yes! You said that you didn't want me to die. There! And it was very nice of you." She gazed at him with innocent frankness.

"What else?" faltered Cosgriff, redder than ever the weather warranted.

"That's all," returned Rita. "Was there more? Dear me!"

Cosgriff wriggled at his post, and looked helplessly away, up the road.

"I shall sit here," decreed Rita, as if dealing with a refractory boy, and saying that *he* should sit somewhere, "until you explain, or the ants eat me up—and they've begun already."

Cosgriff gave a stamp of despair.

"I said I loved you," he blurted.

"Oh," uttered Rita demurely.

"When you were lying here as if you were dead, it—it made me crazy, you see," he pleaded.

"Thank you," she murmured.

"I know I'm a fool, and—and everything," he flashed passionately.

"Maybe you are. But you aren't very complimentary."

At the plaintive voice by his feet Cosgriff gazed down in sudden bewilderment. He could descry only the top of a white-ribboned, saucy-brimmed Summer hat. The face beneath it must be bent forward, under cover.

"Rita!" His tone was excited, eager.

The hat quivered slightly, but inclined at a sharper angle.

"Rita!" Cosgriff's tone was admonitory. He sat down flat and peered under. "Will you?" he asked.

"Will I what?" purled the voice.

"Marry me!"

The hat instantly tilted back, disclosing what it had been hiding. Out from a blushing, dimpled face looked straight at him a pair of dewy, laughing gray orbs.

"Yes," replied Rita. "But you talk so much better when I'm not listening."

And if the stupid world may not guess what then occurred, a large brown locust with beady eyes can tell.

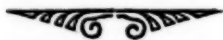
"Now," she said, "we *ought* to get the milk."

"I suppose so," he consented. He tenderly drew her to her feet.

"And we must hurry with it, so that it won't sour," she said wisely.

"It can't sour—with us," he declared happily.

With the pail between them, jealously grasped by each as if in token of their mutual estate, they trudged away down the yellow road. Behind, in the shade, one of the two relicts amidst the clover gave a loud-gurgling sigh. In the elm the locust resumed his pæan, with strain afresh pulsing through it. In the ditch the runabout, canted fore and aft, bided further adventure—resting, so to speak, on its laurels.



THE CORNER OF A HEART

By Roy Farrell Greene

ONE corner of her girlish heart she yielded first to me,
 And halted there, because the rest was occupied, you see,
 By tenants who were kin to her, and who, as you'll divine,
 Through having dwelt there many years had stronger claims than mine.
 As slight concession e'en as this most proud was I to win,
 And with affection closely packed, I managed to move in;
 Yet soon I found the quarters cramped, and with a wooer's art
 I coaxed an added portion to that corner of her heart.

I quite forget which one it was my spread of love displaced—
 If Cousin John's or Uncle Will's heart-lodgings were effaced
 By this designing move of mine. But someone, it is plain,
 Lost out while I was winning the expansion of domain.
 And yet, the corner thus enlarged had held me but a day
 When, "Someone's got to move!" I vowed, "we're in each other's way!
 Of tenants here you might transfer to Memory a part!
 I'll have to have more room than just one corner of your heart!"

The transfer was arranged, and oh, the ripple of her laugh,
 When she avowed, "Your corner's grown till now much more than half
 My heart you're occupying, dear. You well know what that means—
 That all the other tenants, now, are crowded like sardines!"
 "Well, more of them will have to move!" with candor I avowed,
 "While those whom you select to stay must still more closely crowd!"
 And move they did (clear out at last), which shows the greedy part
 A man will play if he's allowed *one corner* in a heart!

STAGE CONVENTIONS IN MODERN TIMES

By Clayton Hamilton

I

IN 1581 Sir Philip Sidney praised the tragedy of "Gorboduc," which he had seen acted by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple, because it was "full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases." A few years later the young poet, Christopher Marlowe, promised the audience of his initial tragedy that they should "hear the Scythian Tamburlaine threatening the world with high astounding terms."

These two statements are indicative of the tenor of Elizabethan plays. "Gorboduc," to be sure, was a ponderous piece, made according to the pseudo-classical fashion that soon went out of favor; while "Tamburlaine the Great" was triumphant with the drums and trappings of romance. The two plays were diametrically opposed in method; but they had this in common: each was full of stately speeches and of high astounding terms.

Nearly a century later, in 1670, John Dryden added to the second part of his "Conquest of Granada" an epilogue in which he criticized adversely the dramatists of the elder age. Speaking of Ben Jonson and his contemporaries, he said:

But were they now to write, when critics weigh
Each line, and every word, throughout a play,
None of them, no, not Jonson in his height,
Could pass without allowing grains for weight.

Wit's now arrived to a more high degree;
Our native language more refined and free:
Our ladies and our men now speak more wit
In conversation than those poets writ.

This criticism was characteristic of

a new era that was dawning in the English drama, during which a playwright could hope for no greater glory than to be praised for the brilliancy of his dialogue or the smartness of his repartee.

At the present day, if you ask the average theatre-goer about the merits of the play that he has lately been to see, he will praise it not for its stately speeches nor its clever repartee, but because its presentation was "so natural." He will tell you that "Delancey" gave an apt and admirable reproduction of contemporary manners in New York; he will mention the make of the automobile that went chugging off the stage at the second curtain-fall of "Man and Superman," or he will assure you that "Lincoln" made him feel the very presence of the martyred President his father really saw.

These different classes of comments give evidence of three distinct steps in the evolution of the English drama. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was essentially a Drama of Rhetoric, throughout the eighteenth century it was mainly a Drama of Conversation, and during the nineteenth century it has grown to be a Drama of Illusion. During the first period it aimed at poetic power, during the second at brilliancy of dialogue, and during the third at naturalness of representation.

It is generally conceded that the form of drama in any age is conditioned by three influences which are always brought to bear upon the playwright: the physical conditions of the theatre in which the play is produced, the

methods of the actors by whom it is played, and the taste of the audiences before whom it is performed. Each of these influences has tended through the centuries toward a greater naturalization of stage conventions. The gradual perfecting of the physical conditions of the theatre has made possible the Drama of Illusion, the conventions of the actor's art have undergone a similar progression, and at the same time the change in the taste of the theatre-going public has made a well-sustained illusion a condition precedent to success upon the modern stage.

II

MR. BEN GREET, in his sceneless performances of Shakespeare during recent seasons, has reminded us of some of the main physical features of the Elizabethan theatre; and the others are so generally known that I need only review them briefly. A typical Elizabethan play-house, like the Globe or the Blackfriars, stood roofless in the air. The stage was a projecting platform surrounded on three sides by the groundlings who had paid threepence for the privilege of standing in the pit; and round this pit or yard were built boxes for the city madams and gentlemen of means. Often the side edges of the stage itself were lined with young gallants perched on three-legged stools, who twitted the actors when they pleased or disturbed the play by boisterous interruptions. At the back of the platform was hung an arras through which the players entered, and which could be drawn aside to discover a set piece of stage furnishing, like a bed or a banqueting board. Above the arras was built an upper room, which might serve as Juliet's balcony or as the speaking-place of a commandant supposed to stand upon a city's walls. No scenery was employed except some elaborate properties that might be drawn on and off before the eyes of the spectators, like the trellised arbor in the "Spanish Tragedy" on which the young Horatio was hanged. Since there was no cur-

tain, the actors could never be "discovered" on the stage and were forced to exit at the end of every scene. Plays were produced by daylight, under the sun of afternoon; and the stage could not be darkened, even when it was necessary for Macbeth to perpetrate a midnight murder.

In order to succeed in a theatre such as this, the drama was of necessity obliged to be a Drama of Rhetoric. From 1576, when James Burbage built the first play-house in London, until 1642, when the theatres were formally closed by act of Parliament, the drama dealt with stately speeches and with high astounding terms. It was played upon a platform, and had to appeal to the ears of the audience rather than to their eyes. Spectacular elements it had to some extent—gaudy, though inappropriate, costumes, and stately processions across the stage; but no careful imitation of the actual facts of life, no illusion of reality in the representment, could possibly be effected.

The absence of scenery forced the dramatists of the time to introduce poetic passages to suggest the atmosphere of their scenes. Lorenzo and Jessica opened the last act of "The Merchant of Venice" with a pretty dialogue descriptive of a moonlit evening, and the banished duke in "As You Like It" discoursed at length upon the pleasures of life in the forest. The stage could not be darkened in "Macbeth"; but the hero was made to say, "Light thickens, and the crow makes wing to the rooky wood." Sometimes, when the scene was supposed to change from one country to another, a chorus was sent forth, as in "Henry V," to ask the audience frankly to transfer their imaginations overseas.

The fact that the stage was surrounded on three sides by standing spectators forced the actor to emulate the platform orator. Set speeches were introduced bodily into the text of a play, although they impeded the progress of the action. Jacques reined a comedy to a standstill while he discoursed at length upon the seven ages

of man. Soliloquies were common, and formal dialogues prevailed. By convention, all characters, regardless of their education or station in life, were considered capable of talking not only verse, but poetry. The untutored sea-captain in "Twelfth Night" spoke of "Arion on the dolphin's back," and in another play the saphheads Salanio and Salarino discoursed most eloquent music.

In New York at the present day a singular similarity to Elizabethan conventions may be noted in the Chinese theatre in Doyers street. Here we have a platform drama in all its nakedness. There is no curtain, and the stage is bare of scenery. The musicians sit upon the stage, and the actors enter through an arras at the right or at the left of the rear wall. The costumes are elaborate, and the players frequently parade around the stage. Long speeches and set colloquies are common. Only the crudest properties are used. Two candlesticks and a small image on a table are taken to represent a temple; a man seated upon an overturned chair is supposed to be a general on a charger; and when a character is obliged to cross a river he walks the length of the stage trailing an oar behind him. The audience does not seem to notice that these conventions are unnatural—any more than did the 'prentices in the pit, when Burbage, with the sun shining full upon his face, announced that it was then the very witching time of night.

The Drama of Rhetoric which was demanded by the physical conditions of the Elizabethan stage survived the Restoration and did not die until the day of Addison's "Cato." Imitations of it have even struggled on the stage within the nineteenth century. The "Virginius" of Sheridan Knowles and the "Richelieu" of Bulwer-Lytton were both framed upon the Elizabethan model, and carried the platform drama down to recent times. At the present day we have a curious analogue of the platform drama in our vaudeville houses. Here the scene is laid as frankly on the stage as ever it was in

the open-air theatres of the Bank-side.

But though traces of the platform drama still exist, the period of its pristine vigor terminated with the closing of the theatres in 1642. When the drama was resumed in 1660, the physical conditions of the theatre underwent a material change. At this time two great play-houses were chartered—the King's Theatre in Drury Lane, and the Duke of York's Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Thomas Killigrew, the manager of the Theatre Royal, was the first to introduce women actors on the stage; and parts which formerly had been played by boys were soon performed by actresses as moving as the great Elizabeth Barry.

To William Davenant, the manager of the Duke's Theatre, belongs the credit for a still more important innovation. During the eighteen years when public dramatic performances had been prohibited, he had secured permission now and then to produce an opera upon a private stage. For these musical entertainments he took as a model the masques, or court celebrations, which had been the most popular form of private theatricals in the days of Elizabeth and James. Now, as is well known, the masques had been produced with elaborate scenic appointments even at a time when the professional stage was bare of scenery. While the theatres had been closed, Davenant had used scenery in his operas, to keep them out of the forbidden pale of professional plays; and now in 1660, when he came forth as a regular theatre manager, he continued to use scenery, and introduced it into the production of comedies and tragedies.

But the use of scenery was not the only innovation that carried the Restoration theatre far beyond its Elizabethan prototype. Play-houses were now regularly roofed; and the stage was artificially lighted by lamps. The shifting of scenery demanded the use of a curtain; and it became possible for the first time to disclose actors upon the stage and to leave them

grouped before the audience at the ending of an act.

All of these improvements rendered possible a closer approach to naturalness of representation than had ever been made before. Palaces and flowered meads, drawing-rooms and city streets, could now be suggested by actual scenery instead of by descriptive passages in the text. Costumes became appropriate, and properties were more nicely chosen to give a flavor of actuality to the scene. At the same time the platform receded, and the groundlings no longer stood about it on the sides. The gallants were banished from the stage, and the greater part of the audience was gathered directly in front of the actors. Some traces of the former platform system, however, still remained. In front of the curtain the stage projected into a wide "apron," as it was called, lined on either side by boxes filled with spectators; and the house was so inadequately lighted that almost all the acting had to be done within the focus of the footlights. After the curtain rose the actors advanced into this projecting "apron" and performed the main business of the act beyond the range of scenery and furniture.

With the "apron" stage arose a more natural form of play than had been produced upon the Elizabethan platform. The Drama of Rhetoric was soon supplanted by the Drama of Conversation. Oratory gradually disappeared, set speeches were abolished and poetic lines gave place to rapid repartee. The comedy of conversation that began with Sir George Etherege in 1664 reached its culmination with Sheridan in a little more than a hundred years; and during this century the drama became more and more natural as the years progressed. Even in the days of Sheridan, however, the conventions of the theatre were still essentially unreal. An actor entered a room by walking through the walls; stage furniture was formally arranged; and each act terminated with the players grouped in a semi-

circle and bowing obeisance to applause. The lines in Sheridan's comedies were indiscriminately witty. Every character, regardless of his birth or education, had his clever things to say; and the servant bandied epigrams with the lord.

It was not until the nineteenth century was well under way that a decided improvement was made in the physical conditions of the theatre. When Madame Vestris assumed the management of the Olympia Theatre in London in 1831 she inaugurated a new era in stage conventions. Her husband Charles James Mathews says in his autobiography, "There was introduced that reform in all theatrical matters which has since been adopted in every theatre in the kingdom. Drawing-rooms were fitted up like drawing-rooms and furnished with care and taste. Two chairs no longer indicated that two persons were to be seated, the two chairs being removed indicating that the two persons were *not* to be seated." Soon after this a further innovation was marked by the introduction of the "box set," as it is called. Instead of representing an interior scene by a series of wings set one behind the other, the scene-shifters now built the side walls of a room solidly from front to rear; and the actors were made to enter, not by walking through the wings, but by opening real doors that turned upon their hinges. At the same time, instead of the formal stage furniture of former years, appointments were introduced that were carefully designed to suit the actual conditions of the room to be portrayed. From this time stage-settings advanced rapidly to greater and greater degrees of naturalness. Acting, however, was still largely conventional; for the "apron" stage survived, with its semicircle of footlights, and every important piece of stage business had to be done within their focus.

The greatest revolution of modern times in stage conventions owes its origin directly to the invention of the electric light. Now that it is possible to make every corner of the stage

clearly visible from all parts of the house, it is no longer necessary for an actor to hold the centre of the scene. The introduction of electric lights abolished the necessity of the "apron" stage and made possible the picture-frame proscenium. The removal of the "apron" struck the death-blow to the Drama of Conversation and led directly to the Drama of Illusion. As soon as the picture-frame proscenium was adopted the audience demanded a picture to be placed within the frame. The stage became essentially pictorial, and began to be used to represent faithfully the actual facts of life.

Now for the first time was realized the graphic value of the curtain-fall. It became customary to ring the curtain down upon a picture that summed up in itself the entire dramatic accomplishment of the scene, instead of terminating an act with a general exodus of the performers or with a semicircle of bows.

The most extraordinary advances in natural stage-settings have been made within the memory of the present generation of theatre-goers. Sunsets and starlit skies, moonlight rippling over moving waves, fires that really burn, windows of actual glass, fountains flashing with real water—all of the naturalistic devices of the latter-day Drama of Illusion have been developed in the last few decades.

III

ACTING in Elizabethan days was a presentative, rather than a representative, art. The actor was always an actor, and lost his part in himself rather than losing himself in his part. Magnificence, rather than appropriateness of costume, was desired by the platform actor of the Drama of Rhetoric. He wished all eyes to be directed to himself, and never desired to be considered merely as a component part of a great stage picture. Actors at that time were often robustious, periwigged fellows who sawed the air with their hands and tore a passion to tatters.

With the rapid development of the theatre after the Restoration came a movement toward greater naturalness in the conventions of acting. The slayer in the "apron" of a Queen Anne page resembled a drawing-room entertainer rather than a platform orator. Fine gentlemen and ladies in the boxes that lined the "apron" applauded the witticisms of Sir Courtly Nice or Sir Fopling Flutter, as if they themselves were partakers in the conversation. Actors like Colley Cibber acquired a great reputation for their natural representation of the manners of polite society.

The Drama of Conversation, therefore, was acted with more natural conventions than the Drama of Rhetoric that had preceded it. And yet we find that Charles Lamb, in writing of the old actors of the eighteenth century, praises them for the essential unreality of their presentations. They carried the spectator far away from the actual world to a region where society was more splendid and careless and brilliant and lax. They did not aim to produce an illusion of naturalness as our actors do today. If we compare the old-style acting of "The School for Scandal," that is described in the essays of Lamb, with the modern performance of "Sweet Kitty Bellairs," which dealt with the same period, we shall see at once how modern acting has grown less presentative and more representative than it was in the days of Bensley and Bannister.

The Drama of Rhetoric and the Drama of Conversation both struggled on in sporadic survivals throughout the first half of the nineteenth century; and during this period the methods of the platform actor and the parlor actor were consistently maintained. The actor of the "old school," as we are now fond of calling him, was compelled by the physical conditions of the theatre to keep within the focus of the footlights, and therefore in close proximity to the spectators. He could take the audience into his confidence more readily than can the player of the present. Sometimes even now an actor

steps out of the picture in order to talk intimately with the audience; but usually at the present day it is customary for actors to seem totally oblivious of the spectators and remain always within the picture on the stage. The actor of the "old school" was fond of the long speeches of the Drama of Rhetoric and the brilliant lines of the Drama of Conversation. It may be remembered that the old actor in "Trelawny of the Wells" condemned a new-style play because it didn't contain "what you could really call a speech." He wanted what the French term a "tirade" to exercise his lungs and split the ears of the groundlings.

But with the growth of the Drama of Illusion, produced within a picture-frame proscenium, actors have come to recognize and apply the maxim, "Actions speak louder than words." What an actor *does* is now considered more important than what he *says*. The most powerful moment in Mrs. Fiske's performance of "Hedda Gabler" was the minute or more in the last act when she remained absolutely silent. This moment was worth a dozen of the "real speeches" that were sighed for by the old actor in "Trelawny." Few of those who saw James A. Hearne in "Shore Acres" will forget the impressive close of the play. The stage represented the living-room of a homely country-house, with a large open fireplace at one side. The night grew late; and one by one the characters retired, until at last old Nathaniel Berry was left alone upon the stage. Slowly he locked the doors and closed the windows and put all things in order for the night. Then he took a candle and went upstairs to bed, leaving the room empty and dark except for the flaming of the fire on the hearth.

Great progress toward naturalness in contemporary acting has been occasioned by the disappearance of the soliloquy and the aside. The relinquishment of these two time-honored expedients has been accomplished only in most recent times. Mr. Pinero's early farces abounded with asides and even lengthy soliloquies; but his later

plays are made entirely without them. The present prevalence of objection to both is largely due to the strong influence of Ibsen's rigid dramaturgic structure. Dramatists have become convinced that the soliloquy and the aside are lazy expedients, and that with a little extra labor the most complicated plot may be developed without resort to either. Now, the passing of the aside has had an important effect on naturalness of acting. In speaking a line audible to the audience but supposed to be unheard by the other characters on the stage, an actor was forced by the very nature of the speech to violate the illusion of the stage picture by stepping out of the frame, as it were, in order to take the audience into his confidence. Not until the aside was abolished did it become possible for an actor to follow the modern rule of seeming totally oblivious of his audience.

There is less logical objection to the soliloquy, however; and I am inclined to think that the present avoidance of it is overstrained. Stage soliloquies are of two kinds, which we may call for convenience the constructive and the reflective. By a constructive soliloquy we mean one introduced arbitrarily to explain the progress of the plot, like that at the beginning of the last act of "Lady Windermere's Fan," in which the heroine frankly tells the audience what she has been thinking and doing between the acts. By a reflective soliloquy we mean one like those of Hamlet, in which the audience is given merely a revelation of a train of personal thought or emotion, and in which the dramatist makes no utilitarian reference to the structure of the plot. The constructive soliloquy is as undesirable as the aside, because it forces the actor out of the stage picture in exactly the same way; but a good actor may easily read a reflective soliloquy without seeming in the least unnatural.

Modern methods of lighting, as we saw, have carried the actor away from the centre of the stage, so that now important business is often done far from the footlights. This tendency

has led to further innovations. Actors now frequently turn their backs to the audience—a thing unheard of before the advent of the Drama of Illusion; and frequently, also, they do their most effective work at moments when they have no lines to speak.

An excellent illustration of the most modern method of acting has been given us in recent seasons by Mr. William Mack, of the Manhattan Theatre Company. His Jørgen Tesman, in "Hedda Gabler," and his Schramm, in "Leah Kleschna," will long be remembered by lovers of histrionic art; for in both of these creations he sank himself into his part instead of sinking his part into himself. The near-sighted, hesitant unawareness of Tesman, the hang-dog, hunted, slumping look of Schramm, were touches of naturalness keenly conceived and perfectly rendered.

But the present tendency toward naturalness of representation has, to some extent, exaggerated the importance of stage-management even at the expense of acting. A successful play by Mr. Clyde Fitch usually owes its popularity, not so much to any excellence of the acting as to the careful attention of the author to the most minute details of the stage picture. Mr. Fitch can make an act out of a wedding or a funeral, a Cook's tour or a steamer deck, a bed or an automobile. The extraordinary cleverness and accuracy of his observation of those petty details that make life a thing of shreds and patches are all that distinguish his method from that of the melodramatist who makes a scene out of a buzz-saw or a water-fall, a locomotive or a ferryboat. Oftentimes the contemporary playwright follows the method suggested by Mr. Crummies to Nicholas Nickleby, and builds his piece around "a real pump and two washing-tubs." At a certain moment in the second act of "The Girl of the Golden West" the wind-storm was the real actor in the scene, and the hero and the heroine were but mutes or audience to the act.

This emphasis of stage illusion is

fraught with certain dangers to the art of acting. In the modern picture-play the lines themselves are often of such minor importance that the success or failure of the piece depends little on the reading of the words. Many young actors, therefore, cannot get that rigid training in the art of reading which could be secured in the stock companies of the generation past. Poor reading is the one great weakness of contemporary acting. I can think of only one actor on the American stage today whose reading of both prose and verse is always faultless. I mean Mr. Otis Skinner, who secured his early training playing minor parts with actors of the "old school." It has become possible, under present conditions, for young actresses ignorant of elocution and unskilled in the first principles of impersonation to be exploited as stars merely because of their personal charm. A beautiful young woman, whether she can act or not, may easily appear "natural" in a society play, especially written around her; and the public, lured by a pair of eyes or a head of hair, is made as blind as love to the absence of histrionic art. When the great Madame Modjeska last appeared at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, presenting some of the most wonderful plays that the world has ever seen, she played to empty houses, while the New York public was flocking to see some new slip of a girl seem "natural" on the stage and appear pretty behind the picture-frame proscenium.

IV

A COMPARISON of the psychology of an Elizabethan audience with that of a theatre-full of people at the present day is, in many ways, disadvantageous to the latter. With our forefathers theatre-going was an exercise in the lovely art of "making-believe." They were told that it was night and they forgot the sunlight; their imaginations swept around England to the trampling of armored kings, or were whisked away at a word to that Bohemia which is a

desert country by the sea; and while they looked upon a platform of bare boards, they breathed the sweet air of the Forest of Arden. They needed no scenery by Alma-Tadema to make them think themselves in Rome.

"What country, friends, is this?" asked Viola. "This is Illyria, lady." And the boys in the pit scented the keen, salt air and heard the surges crashing on the rocky shore.

Nowadays elaborateness of stage illusion has made spoiled children of us all. We must have a doll with real hair, or else we cannot play at being mothers. We have been pampered with mechanical toys until we have lost the art of playing without them. Where have our imaginations gone, that we must have real rain upon the stage? Shall we clamor for real snow before long, that must be kept in cold storage against the Spring season? A longing for concreteness has befogged our fantasy. Even so excellent an actor as Mr. Forbes Robertson cannot read the great speech beginning, "Look here, upon this picture and on this," in which Hamlet obviously refers to two imaginary portraits in his mind's eye, without pointing successively to two absurd caricatures that are daubed upon the scenery.

The theatre has grown older since the days when Burbage recited that same speech upon a bare platform; but I am not entirely sure that it has grown any wiser. We theatre-goers have come to manhood and have put away childish things; but there was a sweetness about the naïveté of childhood that we can never quite regain. No longer do we dream ourselves in a garden of Spring-

tide blossoms; we can only look upon canvas trees and paper flowers. No longer are we charmed away to that imagined spot where journeys end in lovers' meeting; we can only look upon love in a parlor and notice that the furniture is natural. No longer do we harken to the rich resonance of the Drama of Rhetoric; no longer do our minds kindle with the brilliant epigrams of the Drama of Conversation. Good reading is disappearing from the stage; and in its place we are left the devices of the stage-carpenter.

It would be absurd to deny that modern stagecraft has made possible in the theatre many worthy things that were not dreamt of in the philosophy of Shakespeare. Mr. Pinero's plays are better made than those of the Elizabethans, and in a narrow sense hold the mirror up to nature more successfully than theirs. But our latter-day fondness for natural representation has afflicted us with one tendency that the Elizabethans were luckily without. In our desire to imitate the actual facts of life we sometimes become near-sighted and forget the larger truths that underlie them. We give our plays a definite date by founding them on passing fashions; we make them of an age, not for all time. We discuss contemporary social problems on the stage instead of the eternal varieties lodged deep in the general heart of man. We have outgrown our pristine simplicity, but we have not yet arrived at the age of wisdom. Perhaps when playgoers have progressed for another century or two they may discard some of the trappings and the suits of our present drama, and become again like little children.



OBLIGING

OLD LADY (*hesitating at the threshold*)—Is this the smoking-car?
CONDUCTOR—No'm; but there ain't no one else on board—you can smoke here if you want to.

SOME PRE-HYMENEAL EMOTIONS

By Kellett Chambers

SCENE—*Library in a town house. A beautiful young woman, in morning dress, seats herself and uses the telephone.*

Hello! . . . 581 Gramercy, please. Yes . . . Hello! Is that the Veterinary College Hospital? . . . This is Miss Larrabee. I wish to speak to the surgeon who is attending my dog, Coquelin . . . Why, I left him there yesterday. He is a beautiful French bull, with a lovely corkscrew tail . . . Oh, is that you, doctor? Have you found out what is the matter with my poor Coquelin? . . . Why, I can't imagine, unless—well, he was always chewing things . . . Chicken bones? Oh, yes—he used to crunch them right up and swallow them. And bits of coal and kindling-wood and polo balls—he was perfectly crazy about polo balls . . . Do you suppose cherry stones could have been bad for him? . . . Yes, he was so fond of cherries—just swallowed them, stones and all. I thought it was so cute of him, and the other day he ate nearly a pound out of my hand. . . . Oh, dear! How terrible! Oh, I'll never forgive myself—never! . . . An operation? . . . Is it really necessary? . . . Why, it must be appendicitis, isn't it? . . . Now, doctor, it sounds awfully like appendicitis, and I ought to know, because papa had it last season . . . Yes, please. If you happen to mention it to anybody, just say that Miss Larrabee's five-hundred-dollar French bulldog, Coquelin, had to be operated on for appendicitis. . . . Yes. Now, doctor, of course I have the greatest confidence in your skill, but don't you think we could arrange for a consultation with

some famous specialist? Oh, but it would be very mean of them to refuse. Coquelin isn't an American dog. . . . Yes, I see. . . . Well, I suppose you'd better go ahead, but you'll be very, very gentle with him, won't you? . . . And be sure to give him plenty of ether, so that he won't feel the horrid knives and things. You see, I'm to be married tomorrow . . . to be MARRIED . . . M-A-R-R-I- Why, it's been in all the papers! . . . Yes, tomorrow; and if anything terrible happened to Coquelin, I'd look a perfect fright . . . FRIGHT—F-R-I . . . Yes. My heart would be broken, and I'd have a red nose. . . . Not rose—NOSE. . . . Yes. . . . All right, doctor . . . Yes, call me up as soon as it's over. Oh, I know he'll be awfully good. Good-bye! (*Hangs up the receiver.*) Fancy that old darling being smart enough to get appendicitis!

Applies herself again to the telephone.

Hello! . . . 3627 38th, please. Hello! Is that madame? . . . Well, I wish to speak to her. . . . Miss Larrabee. . . . About my wedding-dress, of course. . . . Well, perhaps you can tell me what's the matter with it. . . . Why, in every way! It's a perfect botch! . . . What's that? . . . Hello! . . . Oh, is that you, madame? (*With sudden sweetness.*) Good morning. Very well, thank you, but fearfully rushed. . . . My wedding-dress? Oh, yes. Why, it's simply beautiful! . . . Yes. Terribly cunning! Your creations always have such an *artistic* touch. . . . Yes. But—now, madame, I want you to be a perfect dear and send right up for it to fix it over. . . .

Well, you see, it doesn't show my figure at all. . . . My figure . . . P-I-G—SHAPE. . . . Yes. You've gone and given me those loose, straight lines again. . . . Oh, I know they're *artistic*, but. . . . What's that? . . . Oh, yes; I may have *said* Empire, but I *meant* a sort of *modified* Empire effect. I'm sure I used the word "modified."

Well, I meant to. You might have known that I didn't want to conceal every natural curve. On my wedding-day, too! And one can show so much in those princess things when they're cut perfectly snug. I saw Mrs. Bob Halifax in one yesterday, and she looked as if she had been poured into it. . . . Poured—p-o-u—

Yes, dear. Of course, I don't want to look like Mrs. Bob, and I think I'd pass away if I had her hips, but I don't think my lines are altogether *bad* in a *girlish* way—do you? (*With a simper.*) Oh! You're just flattering me! . . . Well, you *will* try to do something with it, *won't* you? Oh, if you knew how harassed I am!

(*Tearfully*) And I've just had perfectly frightful news about my dog. He has to have an operation for appendicitis . . . A-P-E-N—oh, I don't know how to spell the horrid thing. . . . Yes. I'm simply beside myself! Everything coming at once like that—as if a wedding wasn't enough! (*Hysterically.*) I don't care! You'll have to make radical changes in the lines of the dress. . . . Oh, for heaven's sake take it away and don't bother me any more! . . . Hmh? . . .

Who? (*With sudden interest.*) Miss Vanbillion? Why, I thought she had ordered her wedding-gown in Paris. . . . Well, you're in luck. I congratulate you! . . . Just the same model as mine? You don't say! Well, I'm glad mine is coming off first. They can't say I copied her, anyway! . . . Hmh? . . .

Oh, I don't know. Maybe I can make it do as it is. No—wait a minute—hello! . . . Yes, perhaps you'd better send for it, anyway, and smarten it up wherever you can. Does she

furnish her own lace? . . . Of course! That old point of her mother's. They call it a family heirloom, but I know where Mrs. Vanbillion bought it. However, my lace will make a fair showing, won't it? Gracious! I know poor papa will pass away when he sees the bill. But you'd better stick on some more of it. . . . Oh, I don't know. Wherever there's room for it. Don't skimp . . . Hmh? . . . No, don't make any radical change in the lines. It's just darling as it is. I'll come in late this afternoon. Good-bye!

(*Hangs up receiver and juggles it up and down vigorously.*)

Hello! . . . 350 Cortlandt, please. . . . Hello! Three-five—oh? . . . Give me Mr. Gretorex, please. . . . Never you mind the name! He'll know who it is! . . .

(*To herself.*) That impertinent girl knows my voice perfectly well! (*Into the telephone.*) Hello! . . . Good morning, Ernest! (*Pronouncing the name with a shade of embarrassment, and composing her features into lines of decorum.*) Yes, they came, thank you. You're always so thoughtful! . . .

Yes, I love the books you select for me, and I'm just dying to get deep into Herbert Spencer and "The History of Civilization," but at present I'm simply the slave of my dressmaker. She won't give me a moment's peace. *You're* the only one that understands the serious side of my nature. . . .

No, you mustn't be sentimental—not over the 'phone. I don't think sentiment is becoming to you, anyway. You're so strong and intellectual! . . . Goodness! Who could have been so spiteful? . . .

No! I never called you "old." I don't think you look a day over thirty-five. . . . Well, thirty-six or thirty-seven. . . . Indeed, it's very becoming to you, especially with the way you brush it forward above your ears. And there isn't a single gray hair on top, because I've looked carefully. Having it just at the sides gives you a very distinguished air, like

Herbert Kelcey. . . . No, I never flatter. . . . Oh! do be careful! (*Glancing nervously over her shoulder, as if he could be overheard.*) No, no! Not now! . . . Oh, it's very unkind of you to say that! Just because I refuse to say *ridiculous* things over the telephone! I'm sick and tired of being told that I have no heart. . . . Hmh? . . . Why, nobody ever said it to me before! Nobody was ever so rude! There! But when a man's marrying a girl, I suppose he thinks he can say *anything*! . . . No, I can't forgive a person so quickly when my deepest feelings are wounded like that. . . . Well, I'll think it over. . . . Well, don't do it again. . . . Good-bye. . . . No, I won't! . . . Oh, bother! . . . Well, just for this once. Good-bye, dear. . . . Well, *dearest*! Are you satisfied? . . . Wait a minute! . . . Hello! . . . Listen! As a matter of fact I've got a *great deal more heart* than most girls in my set! There! (*Hastily hangs up the receiver.*) *No heart*, indeed! I suppose he'll always be saying that because I don't want to spoon all the time! Ugh!

The Telephone—Ting-a-ling, a-ling, a-ling!

THE GIRL—Hello . . . Yes. . . . Yes, this is Miss Larrabee. . . . Who? . . . Gracious! (*Shows profound agitation.*) When did you come back? . . . Oh, so you haven't heard? . . . Oh, nothing—that is, nothing much . . . Why, I don't see anything funny in my tone. I'm just a little tired, that's all. . . . No; I sha'n't be at home all day. . . . No; I have an engagement this evening. . . . No; I—I have an engagement tomorrow, too. I'm very sorry—that is—er—it's a rather important engagement. . . . No, I can't put it off. . . . Well, I'm going away after that. . . . Out of town. Abroad. . . . Really, I don't see why you should be so interested in my movements. . . . Oh, but that was ages ago. . . . Well, it was quite six months ago. . . . Now, Mr. Fortescue! . . . Oh, I never called

you "Jim"! . . . I didn't! . . . Well, only once or twice, and I was sorry for it afterward. . . . Because—oh, don't you understand that it was all perfect nonsense? We were utterly unsuited to each other. . . . Well, I mean that you've got to marry a rich girl, Jim, and I . . . No, it isn't cold-blooded; it's common sense. . . . No, no! You mustn't say such things! . . . Well, yes—there's a reason. Listen! I—I'm going to be married, Jim. . . . Yes. Tomorrow. . . . 'Sh-h-h! No, it's too late, even if. . . . Oh, don't, dear!—don't!

(*Drops the receiver and buries her face in her hands; but recovers in a moment and again addresses herself eagerly to the 'phone.*)

Are you there? . . . Poor old Jim! It's a real tragedy, isn't it? Oh, I'm stirred to the very depths of my being! . . . No, dear; it's too late. I daren't interfere with Destiny. . . . With DESTINY . . . Well, I simply couldn't endure life in a pokey flat, and trim my own hats. . . . Hmh? . . . Well, I don't know whether you ever met him or not. Mr. Ernest Gretorex. . . . Oh, immensely! That's why—I mean—er—Long Island real estate, you know. The family owned miles and miles, and then the boom came . . . Indeed not! He isn't a day over forty or forty-five . . . Well, forty-seven or forty-eight. Yes, I have the greatest respect, and—and liking for him, and I think I can persuade him to take more of an interest in society. . . . The idea! . . . Now, there you go! I used to think you superior to other men, but you're just like all the rest! The idea of accusing me of having *no heart*! You, of all men! . . . No, no, no! Don't go like that! Wait! . . . Hello! . . . Are you there? (*Whimpering.*) You needn't be so cruel and insulting. Our parting ought to have something dignified about it. . . . Now, I shall always feel toward you as a sister. . . . S-i-s—. . . . Hello! . . . Are you there? . . .

Mr. Fortescue! Jim!
 . . . Hello! Hello, Central!
 What do you mean by cutting me off? You did!
 He didn't! Well, get me that number again! Hello!
 Gone? The insolence! (*Bangs receiver on hook and gives way to fretful indignation.*) Spiteful wretch! But he always had an ugly, selfish nature! (*A cheerful thought strikes her, and she once more employs the obliging telephone.*)

Hello! 941 Plaza—and *don't you cut me off this time* Yes, you did! Hello! Oh, is that you, Ethel? Helene. . . . Yes. Oh! I've just had a perfectly terrible time! Poor Jim Fortescue has come back, and he called me up the first thing and I had to tell him! Oh, he carried on dreadfully! I know he'll go off and do something desperate. . . . Desperate, dear—yes. My heart is broken! His voice just *quivered!* It's frightfully tragic! I feel just like Mary Queen of Scots, or Hedda Gabler, or somebody like that. Do you know, I believe he'll have an attack of brain fever, or something. I don't know how I shall ever get through the ordeal tomorrow, with that poor face haunting me—I mean that voice. . . . Oh, we had a beautiful parting! I told him that I should always feel toward him as a sister, and he—(*whimpering*)—he said he would carry my image in his heart, as in a shrine, forever and ever! What's that? Why, I'm not to blame in the least! Ethel, you've no right to accuse me of having no heart! It's deliberately catty of you, after what I've been through this morning! Oh, everything! Poor Coquelin has appendicitis, and he's being operated on now. . . . The only comfort is that Daisy Vanbillion is copying the model of my wedding-gown. . . . Yes, she saw it at madame's and said she wanted hers just like it. . . . Well, there are some compensations in life. . . . Thank you. Good-bye, darling! I must go and lie down—have a frightful nervous headache. *Au revoir!*

(*Hangs up receiver and sniffs at her vinaigrette.*)

THE TELEPHONE—Ting-a-ling, a-ling, a-ling, a-ling!

THE GIRL—Hello! Oh, is it over, doctor? No! no! Oh, what have you done? I'm sure it was a reckless operation! Couldn't anything have saved him? And he never recovered consciousness? Oh, doctor, why did you tell me? It was very inconsiderate of you! No, I didn't. I distinctly told you not to tell me until after my wedding. . . . Well, that was what I meant to say, and you might have known! Oh, I'm heart-broken! No, I don't want to hear any more! (*Hangs up the receiver and wrings her hands tragically.*) Coquelin! Muvver's darling! Dead!

(*Wipes her eyes, blows her nose, and then, with sudden determination, re-addresses herself to the telephone.*)

Hello! 350 Cortlandt. . . . Hello! I want Mr. Gretorex, please. . . . Hello! Oh, it is I—your unhappy Helene! Yes, I hope you'll be sorry, now. . . . Why, Coquelin is dead! He was so dear to me! And you—(*whimpering*)—you said I had no heart! No, I can never forget that! If you knew how *my heart* feels now, over my darling Coquelin, you'd want to b-b-bite your tongue off for having s-s-said such a thing to mum-mum-me-e-e! (*Weeps genteelly into the transmitter.*) What's that? Oh, no, no! I shall never keep another dog! Well, not a French bull, anyway. . . . Oh, I know you meant it in kindness, but Old English sheepdog? Well, they're terribly smart this season. But, of course, I could never love him as I loved Coquelin. And then poor Coquelin had such a pedigree. Has this dog a pedigree? A blue-ribboner? Really? Yes, I suppose one of those big, fuzzy-wuzzy dogs would be a change for me. Oh, but you don't think it would look as if I were unfaithful to Coquelin? Really not? I'm so afraid that if I refused to take

him it might hurt your feelings. Would it? . . . You're *quite sure* it would hurt your feelings, dear? . . . Well, I'll try to be very kind to him, for your sake. But you'll promise never, *never* again to accuse me of having no heart? . . . Oh, if you knew how I have cried over that! . . . Well, send him right up. . . . Good-bye. . . . Wait a minute! . . . Hello! . . . Will it be good form to tie his blue ribbon on his collar when I take him out on the Avenue? Won't that be lovely! Good-bye, *darling!*



LOVE

By Tom Masson

“YOU will have to teach me,” he said, “how to make love.”

She laughed.

“That would imply,” she rejoined, “that I knew how to myself—which I do not.”

“We are both, then, novices.”

“So it would seem.”

“Well, what would you suggest, as a beginning?”

She smiled.

“If,” she replied, “I should suggest anything, it would imply that I knew more about the subject than you.”

He grew grave.

“And if,” he replied, “I should make a beginning, it would be evidence that I knew more than you—whereas we are both supposed to be equal—we are both equally ignorant.”

He rose and held out his hand.

“Good night!” he said, and before she knew what he was doing he had kissed her.

“How dare you do that!” she exclaimed. “You, who declared that you knew nothing of love.”

“Neither do I, I assure you. But I have read somewhere in some old book that one of the ways that a man may make love is to kiss the girl he loves. I have had no actual experience before. I merely acted upon a suggestion. Good night!” and he kissed her again.

She blushed furiously.

“You have no right to do that!” she exclaimed.

“Haven't I?” he replied. “How do you know? You have just admitted that you knew nothing about the matter. Why should you, therefore, hazard an opinion?”

She looked at him curiously.

“But you,” she replied, “why *should* you kiss me? You have also admitted that you knew nothing of love.”

“Nothing,” he replied, “and I couldn't ever myself make a beginning because I knew nothing, when suddenly I remembered what I had read and acted upon it.” He looked at her ardently.

“Now I remember something else that I read,” he went on. “Don't be frightened. I shall only try to repeat it.”

He caught her to him and put his arms around her.

“Dearest,” he whispered, “I love you! I love you!” He kissed her again.

She drew herself away. She held her head up proudly.

“You have deceived me,” she said. “You told me you did not know how to make love.”

Once more he folded her in his arms.

“Darling,” he said, “please don't blame me. It isn't my fault. It is you who have taught me.”

THE LENGTH OF THE TETHER

By Irene Fowler Brown

THE soft voice and the soft skirts trailed up the stairs together. The scent of violets came back into the room and lingered there.

A log glowing in the wide fireplace fell apart and the flame leaped up. It caught the corners of the room and flicked its uncertain light over high oak woodwork, rugs and books, and a Rookwood vase of Autumn roses. The curtains were not yet drawn, and outside the starlight lay white and cold, crisping the October hills to silver. The air was sharp, chill—touched with frost. A hound bayed. Somewhere a horn wound through the stillness.

As the log fell apart a man, leaning with bent head against the mantel, turned on the lights and went over to a desk in the corner. It was a woman's desk—an inlaid bauble, covered with the foolish, fragile silver things that women love. It bespoke a recent presence. Paper lay in disarray upon it; a long white glove had been tossed on top. The man smoothed the glove upon his palm, folded it into his pocket and began to write.

It is a base, a cowardly thing that I do—a thing beyond pardon. I do not expect you to pardon it.

Dear, you cannot understand. I could not make you understand if I tried a thousand years. But you will come nearer understanding than any other woman. . . . I am sitting at your desk; your monogram looks up from the paper as I write; your wrap is over there where you left it, your flowers beside it. Your presence is everywhere; I hear you, see you, and yet—

Do you know what it is to be a savage? To flock with the owls and the wolves and the wild things of the air; to feel the sun blister on your back and the rain slap your face; to lie stomach flat on the crackling

snow with only the stars climbing over you? Do you know what the *Wanderlust* is—this mad, primal longing that is pulling, pulling me tonight—pulling me so that I must go?

Don't let me hurt you too much—but I am tired of civilization, tired of houses, of electric lights and cable-cars and dinner in a dozen courses. I want the dust and grime of the soil. I want to feel it blinding my eyes and choking my throat; to feel the upturned loam against my bare feet. I want to wade waist-deep in water that rasps my skin and sets my teeth to chattering; I want to dress in hides and fight for my food; I want the fierce, untamed things of the forest to pit my strength against; I want to cook my meat on a spit and drink from a hole in the ground. I want to be a primitive man—I who belong to the commonplace, the conventional; I who am sitting here in irreproachable evening dress, fashionably correct from head to foot.

Dear heart, do you understand? This has nothing to do with you. Not one hour of all that golden time with you would I undo. You know that. Of all the years that can make a man's life beautiful, my married years have been the most beautiful to me. But you women are domestic animals. You like your fireside and the soft, cushioned corners where you can curl up in content. Men are different. You tame us for a while and we eat from your hand and lie supine; but we pine for the jungle.

I do not know if I shall come back. I suppose so. I cannot tell. Perhaps some night, with the stars overhead, the sea thundering in my ears, and the mountains lifting high above me, I shall grow weary of it all, and cry out for you and my ingleside. But tonight—well, tonight I do not know. Tonight I am a savage. Tonight with the horn calling, the starlight crisp on the hills, the madness is so great that I cannot resist it. I must go.

That is all. I love you. I would not go tonight, but this longing is stronger than anything in the world. You will have all material things, of course. There is enough money—too much. If some day (I say *if*—I do not know) the road ceases to beckon, and my hot blood cools, if then this home-

light calls me across the world, will you welcome me, I wonder? I wonder.

Forgive me if you can. Forget me when you can. Good-bye.

He folded the letter, addressed it, and stood looking out through the uncurtained window. The stars still touched whitely the October woods; once more the horn wound through the stillness.

But another sound cut across the shrilling of the horn. From upstairs came a child's voice evidently in altercation, half-sleepy, half-protesting, ending in a little gurgle of laughter. Close upon that followed a woman's voice singing softly:

"In a lowly thatched cot at the bend of the road——"

It went on to the end:

"Bye-o, Baby Bunting,
Daddy's gone a-hunting,
To buy a little rabbit skin
To wrap the baby up in——"

went on and began again:

"In a lowly thatched cot——"

The man at the window turned and came over to the fire, the letter still in his fingers. He tore it across, tore it twice, three times. Slowly, deliberately, he dropped the pieces upon the coals and watched until they curled into ashes. Then he drew the shades, bolted the heavy doors, turned off the lights, and went softly up the stairs.



THE ADVENTURER

By Charlotte Becker

FOR me no quiet byway,
No peaceful little lane,
No covert, where the branches
Keep off the wind and rain.

But oh, the open highroad,
With all its dust and glare;
Its questions and its tumult,
Its call to do and dare!

I care not if men count me
A loser in the strife—
So I but drink, unhindered,
The brimming cup of life.

And so my loyal comrades
Shall whisper at the end,
"He never lost his courage,
He never failed a friend!"



RHYMER—Is it necessary for a poet to adopt a *nom de plume*?
SPACER—No, but it's safer.

UNDER STRANGE GODS

By Harriet Gaylord

UNTIL his fortieth year Philip Gordon's life had been unusually prosaic. Called away from college by his father's death, the slender income of the family had made it necessary for him to buckle down to unremitting toil at an age when other youths, through favor of the little god Cupid or the great god Apollo, were having their fill of life's pleasures. He had, however, the satisfaction of having been preëminently successful. As the level-headed vice-president of a prominent Philadelphia bank, his name was now known among financiers, and he had settled down peacefully to a somewhat humdrum bachelor existence, with little realization of what he might have missed, and less expectation of a change. Consequently, it was with consternation that he heard his physician order a complete rest and abstinence from work, if he desired any degree of relief from the severe headaches by which he had been assailed.

"You would better get over to Europe," the doctor had said. "Don't read the newspapers. Don't ask your friends to write you. Go sight-seeing with as much avidity as if you were a Cook's tourist on a thirty days' jaunt. Get all the unused cells in your brain to work, and let the worn-out tissue rest. Be a boy again, and cull crude impressions. Live in what the moment offers, and at the end of four months diagnose your own case. If you're fit, come back. Otherwise, go down to Egypt for the Winter and ride on camels. Don't say you can't spare the time—that statement is threadbare. I tell you brutally that you must."

"What is the alternative?" asked Gordon.

"Nervous prostration surely, and possibly—" the doctor touched his forehead significantly.

"Very well, I will go."

"Good! That's business! A man who pulls up stakes like that will get what he is after. You will be fifteen years younger four months from now. Perhaps I'll come over to make the diagnosis myself. Write me when three months have passed."

Gordon remembered, and wrote that letter one evening in Trent. The next morning he left the train at Mori, sending his luggage on to Riva. Following the directions of the porter, he tramped along the highway for three miles, and then struck out on the mountain road leading to the castle of Count Moncalieri, whose magnificent collection of curios and paintings he had been advised on no account to miss. He had indeed been a boy again, or rather, perhaps, for the first time had entered into his heritage of the freedom of youth. He had done all the regular things in the British Isles and Northern Europe with vivid enjoyment. The people he had met, the sights he had seen, had intoxicated him with a love of all that was beautiful—all that was different from the surroundings of his daily life. And now at last he was in the

... woman country, wooed not wed,
Loved all the more by the earth's male lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!

As he climbed, the morning was fresh around him, and the winding road seemed to lead by easy ascent to the blue heavens. On one side were jagged cliffs, against which nestled evergreen trees, strayed away from their Northern home. On the other he looked down

on the wide valley, a brilliant panorama in vivid greens, dotted here and there with tiny brown chalets and glossy vineyards. Through this valley ran the Adige, a narrow band of silver in the sunlight, and back to the northward loomed the snow-mountains, white and dazzling against the morning sky.

"No man has a right to enjoy such a scene as this alone," declared Gordon aloud. "It brands him as a selfish beast."

As if in answer, he heard the sound of wheels. Walking on till the carriage was close behind, he stepped to one side of the narrow road, and raised his hat mechanically when he saw that the occupants were women. But as his eyes fell on the younger of the two, he realized that he had seen her the evening before at Trent, dining on the veranda of the hotel—at least from his table behind her own he had seen her wonderful hair and the enticing curve of her cheek, and had admired her graceful carriage as she rose and entered the corridor. Now she leaned back and gazed at him indolently. Her large hat lay in her lap, and he saw again the dark hair, brightened with copper lights in the brilliant sunshine. The face beneath was beyond all promise lovely, cast in the rarest mould of Southern lands and colored with their rich prodigality. The expression was imperious, as of a woman of eminent note and power, but Gordon fancied he read there more the wilfulness of a naturally sweet disposition than the hardness of pride and caste. He held her dark eyes with his own for one moment, and when she had passed raised his hat again reverently, though there was none to see.

"Thank God for sending a beautiful woman to crown this day!" he said softly, and, as he pushed on, wondered at finding his heart beating rapidly; wondered at the unwonted excitement in his blood.

"Pshaw!" he thought, "it was only an incident. There are many such in life. One is always better for seeing beauty. I wish—I wish there would be an accident and I might be of some

service!" He felt a vague irritation as the carriage passed safely out of sight.

Then he pulled himself together with an effort, calling his patron deity, Common Sense, to the rescue.

"What a confounded idiot I am! I shouldn't have come alone. It has gone to my brain," he muttered as he pushed up the hill.

With the sudden leap of his pulses as he turned the next corner Common Sense fled in dismay till some more propitious moment, and Gordon strode on with heart swept and garnished, ready, defiantly ready, all in one instant, to follow where strange gods should lead.

The gate of the castle he sought was just before him, and the two women had alighted from the carriage and stood in conversation with the porter. He saw now that the older woman was plainly dressed, and was evidently an attendant. They had turned away and were looking at the landscape when he neared the entrance and asked the porter, in rather lame Italian, if he might enter to examine the renowned art collection of Count Moncalieri.

"The signore requires a card to enter the castle," the man replied.

"Oh, I beg pardon!" said Gordon, hopefully fingering a gold-piece; "I had understood it was open to the public. Is it quite impossible to enter?"

"I regret it so profoundly, most illustrious signore, but I am commanded very strictly. I dare not disobey, though it is my extreme wish to allow the signore to behold the magnificent treasures of the great count. If the signore—" Gordon's Italian was not equal to the strain of comprehending the flood of directions which followed.

The dark-haired woman had drawn near and marked his perplexity. He was a man to inspire confidence. Tall, broad-shouldered, well-set and well-groomed, he wore the subtle distinction of a chivalrous American gentleman.

"Pardon, signore," said the porter, and Gordon realized that he was blocking the way. Turning to the lady he apologized in French. She smiled.

"You speak not the Italian? No? Shall I ask for you in your difficulty?" Not waiting for an answer, she began talking with the porter.

Gordon realized that he had known before that her voice would thrill and vibrate and play tenderly with those rich contralto notes, but he had not dared to hope she would speak English with a quaint hesitation and fascinating accent, which left him entirely in doubt as to her nationality. The obsequious manner of the servant showed that he had gauged rightly her distinction and influence. She turned to him again.

"The porter is now convinced that he should give you the entrance, monsieur. He craves the pardon for his stupidity."

"You are most kind, madame," Gordon exclaimed, trying to restrain his delight within conventional bounds. "It would have been a great disappointment to miss this wonderful collection."

"It is very beautiful. I have seen it many times with my husband. The gods of Italy allowed not that you climb the mountains to be made unhappy."

The brightness of her smile was infectious, and Gordon understood that for some mysterious reason she had chosen to let down the bars of pride, and perhaps rank, between them.

He smothered the vague disappointment which chilled him as she uttered the words "my husband," and recalled his wish for companionship. This was the answer. Such an experience was in keeping with the holiday life he was leading, and perhaps she, as well as he, craved a moment's respite from the conventionalities of life. She was a patrician woman—no adventuress, he would stake his reputation on that.

"Madame," he answered in all

sincerity, "the goodness of the gods at this moment overwhelms me. But for you, I had stormed this castle in vain."

She laughed as she read the pleasure on his face, and together they strolled through the courtyard toward the great stone entrance, her attendant following at a respectful distance. Gordon addressed madame in French, but she replied, with mischief in her eyes:

"Oh, no! It is better for the sceneries perhaps, but we look off there to ice-mountains, and so we speak your English, monsieur, if you please."

"You have seen those same mountains at sunset, madame?" challenged Gordon.

"Is the meaning that so the English can warmer become?" she asked innocently.

"Madame, when one heats an iron very hot, what is its color?"

"Red, glowing; is it not so?"

"And when one heats it seven times more hot in the furnace?"

"It is white. But would you have me believe the English are so? I cannot. At least I have tried. They are so—what you call it?—stiff, that it is very difficult."

"Then in self-defense I own the truth to you. I am an American."

"Ah, that is better. Do you come from the South or the North America, or from the great New York?"

"Madame, I come from a little village near the great New York, called Philadelphia."

She inspected him critically and found him increasingly good to look at—the kind of man who dares and accomplishes.

"It is not so that the people in our little villages appear. Your America I do not understand. Is it perhaps that Philadelphia is greater than Trento and has the big hotels?"

"Greater by far. To be truthful, it is only New Yorkers who belittle our Philadelphia. Madame"—he hesitated for a comparison which would appeal to her, then carelessly chose

the last city he had visited—"it is, I should say, more than twice as large as Munich."

Her eyes contracted for a moment, curiously. Then she said:

"Oh, I see. You have the laugh at me. You have been in München, monsieur?"

"All last week."

She hesitated; then:

"I also was in München. It is my home. It is perhaps that you have me seen, and so you speak of this."

"No, madame. I saw you first last evening at Trento."

She laughed merrily, and Gordon thought he had never seen a face so rich in the play of emotional expression.

"I also have you seen, monsieur. You are so big, one must see you. But I knew not that we should again meet. Is it not now that we enter the castle?"

She showed her card to the servant at the entrance, who bowed with great deference at the name and ushered them into a large reception hall where he begged them to be seated. In a few moments he returned with the major-domo, who showed madame even greater reverence. Gordon could not catch the import of their rapid Italian conversation, but finally she turned to him with an inviting smile.

"He says the count in Rome will be desolated if we do not take *déjeuner*. Will monsieur be so good to join me?"

"I am wholly at your service, madame."

They were shown to a vine-enclosed balcony. Warm, sweet-scented breezes lifted the leaves, and even dared commit the sacrilege of playing with the bewitching curls about madame's face. In and out among the shrubbery noiselessly moved servants in elaborate livery. A fountain trickled drowsily just behind the vines, and by its side a peasant girl thrummed on a guitar the soft, enticing melodies of her native land. Madame was now merry, now indolent, by turns, and was the crowning joy of the dream which Gordon felt was passing into his life forever. Recklessly he plunged

into the delight of the moment. He relaxed. Italy cast over him her wondrous spell. His blood surged in harmony with the beauty around him, and he was no longer a lonely stranger in a strange land. His eyes danced with merriment as he responded to madame's sallies, or gleamed with tenderness as she revealed her softer dependent moods. His ears thrilled with the golden sound of her voice, deep, full throbbing—a voice that he knew must tremble in his heart and fill his dream his whole life long. He did not seek to analyze the bond which drew him to the chance acquaintance of the hour, and no more did he doubt for one moment its compelling reality. They were together and the gods smiled; what more could mortals ask?

At last, almost reluctantly, madame rose.

"Shall we not now behold the beautiful things?" she said. "It is I who shall guide you myself. I have the permission and I know very well the way."

Side by side, and with an ever-increasing sense of isolation from the rest of the world, they wandered through the castle. All was bizarre and full of marvel. Here was a great hall brought bodily from Pompeii—frescoes, mosaics, statuary, vases, and in the centre a fountain splashed brilliantly as it had splashed for the voluptuaries of that doomed city many centuries ago. Here was the ante-chamber of a Turkish harem, hung with marvelous tapestries and priceless lamps, and decorated with ornaments of gold, silver, onyx and ivory. Another room was a lesser edition of the Vatican Library, filled with somber frescoes, brocaded leatherwork, venerable parchments, and rare old tomes. Through elaborate bronze doors they entered a chapel, all crimson and violet, white and gold, resplendent with all manner of precious stones, and hung with Raphaels, Bellinis and Tintoretts. Madame knelt to say her prayer before the alabaster altar on which burned a tiny lamp, and a great flood of reverence for this queenly

woman swept through Philip Gordon's heart as he knelt by her side. It was the highest prayer he could offer; it tingled through all his being and shone in his face as he held the door open for her to pass, and was rewarded by her answering smile.

They were in an armory, and for a few moments paused to note the quaint bronzes, the antique armor and strange weapons from many lands, before passing into the picture gallery. It was here that Gordon marveled most at madame's rare knowledge and comprehension. The count must have ransacked all countries and exhausted many fortunes. The collection of miniatures of court beauties was incomparable. Madame told Gordon how the count had secured a priceless Titian, and assured him that a special Correggio was far better than the copy he would see in the Villa Borghese. With delight she recounted how a Luini had been discovered in a pile of rubbish in an old shop on the Merceria in Venice, when the count and the cardinal were together seeking for curios.

"The count said he knew it was of Luini, but his excellency, he said no. He had found the picture. It was his. So he said, so sure, 'I give it to you when you prove me it is of Luini.' And the count he searched the records, and he found the proof of the—is it not pedigree that you say?—and so he won this very wonderful picture. I have never seen a face so lovely as that of the angel. Is it not also the most beautiful face you have seen?"

"It is very beautiful," Gordon answered evasively as he looked down at her; "perhaps the most beautiful face I ever saw in a picture."

Madame, however, seemed not so much to admire specific loveliness as to be all a-thrill at the very idea of beauty, and in a kind of trance Gordon saw all in the reflection of her own evident delight. He would have found it difficult afterward to state one definite impression except that she was his guide, and he absorbed everything through the inspiration and charm of her personality. He found himself

saying courtly things in harmony with this wonderful experience, not at all in his ordinary line of expression. And when the major-domo had at last bowed them out of the castle, madame gave a little confiding sigh of happiness and asked:

"Ah! is it not so that it has been heavenly, this visit to the castle?"

With no thought of exaggeration, Gordon replied:

"A heaven beyond any of which I had ever dreamed."

Madame reached out her hand impulsively, and he bent and raised it to his lips. Then she said:

"You also go to Riva, is it not so? Then will you not go in my carriage?"

It seemed to Gordon that he had unconsciously expected this. It had all been so perfect, it could not end with the hour.

"Madame is too good!" he replied.

The face of the maid who was already standing by the carriage was stolid and immobile, but Gordon fancied disapproval of madame's cordiality to a stranger lurked behind the mask, and when madame said roguishly, "Thérèse does not speak our English, no, nor understand; it is French that we must speak for her to know; it is a great convenience!" Gordon felt like a schoolboy under the enthrallment of his first secret amour. Yet Thérèse or anyone might have listened to their conversation during that drive to Riva—joyous, innocent, of the day and of the hour, free from thought of past or future.

That evening he dined with madame in the sitting-room of her suite in the hotel, and afterward they wandered together in the great garden by the lake. At first the golden sunset light still played about them, and far away to the north the snow-mountains heaved on high great masses of blue and rose color, opal and pearl. The warm winds swept over the garden, heavy with the odor of magnolias. Again they heard the throbbing of a guitar, and the sound of a woman's voice singing from a balcony, soft, sensuous, alluring. Then the crimson

glory died away, and the last sunset flushes played upon the water. Out of the lake rose the Summer night, cool and sweet, and lights began to twinkle here and there along the border like quivering fire-flies. At their feet they heard the gentle splash, plash of the waves, and overheard the good-night cheep of the drowsy birds. They hardly spoke as they walked, and with their silence the sympathy between them grew and stirred.

They paused in a sheltered nook and leaned on a railing, looking out at the lake. Once or twice the sound of her voice came to him in a golden, quivering whisper, and he answered, hardly knowing what he said. The odor of late roses was in the air. Madame shivered. In silence he wrapped about her the white shawl he had brought from the hotel. She wore a long, trailing white gown, and one deep red rose hung from her hair just above the glorious curve of her neck. As he stood, longing to touch his lips to the rose, to the neck, madame turned with half-shut eyes and lips that smiled, but in the dim light his eyes held hers, and she found no words to say. The stir of her breathing and the rich fragrance of her hair made him tremble. So they stood, one long, long instant; then he felt, rather than saw, that she was unconsciously swaying toward him, drawn by a power outside her will. His arms were opening, when she suddenly drew back and clung to the railing, her face hidden. He waited with pulses tugging against their chains. Finally she turned and spoke. In her voice thrilled a note he had not found there before, a note which made him her slave, and yet held him far away.

"Dear friend," she said, "I cannot more support. In the morning we shall meet again. But now, good night."

The mute appeal in her voice aroused all his chivalry and self-control. He raised her hand reverently to his lips and knew she understood. After conducting her to the door of her apartment he returned to the garden to sit out the long hours, watching the light in her window, doggedly refusing to think

beyond the present; doggedly resolved to know one hour of life.

With the dawn he went to his room, but not to sleep, and at nine o'clock a servant summoned him to breakfast with madame on a balcony overlooking the lake. The beauties of the morning made no impression. He was beyond caring for nature except as it enshrined this flower of womanhood. Her pensive mood of last night was gone. He could not keep pace with her brilliant flashes of repartee. She was enchanting, adorable, irresistible.

As they lingered over their coffee, Gordon became suddenly serious, even stern. She looked at him questioningly. He spoke in low, vibrant tones:

"Madame, I am suddenly poor in words. I thought I knew before all that life held for me. I never dreamed that you were alive and that I should find you here. I must go away and leave you—I understand that only too well. But before I go, will you not give me one day of your friendship? Will you not trust my honor and give me just one day?"

There was a curious, uncomprehending, penetrating look in her eyes.

"But yes," she said. "It will give me pleasure. It is perhaps not *convenable* in America?"

In spite of his mood, Gordon laughed.

"Oh, madame, it is not of American conventionalities I am thinking. We are in Italy. You are more rigid than we."

"But I have Thérèse!"

"And I am very greedy. I want you to leave Thérèse behind and climb the mountain with me alone. Will you trust me and come?"

His eyes met her gaze unflinchingly. She hesitated, a pretty little frown between her brows. Then she laughed, merrily, mischievously.

"Oh, it is not—what you say?—conventional, but I will be *la Américaine* today and we will climb our mountain. It is so few of the opportunities I have to speak your English. I used to could speak it better. It is necessary that I have the practice.

Today you will be my Herr Professor, *mon ami*."

An hour later she joined him, and they began their climb up one of the mountains behind the town. He felt more and more sure that madame was some great and well-known woman, but today she had dressed herself like a simple girl. They might have been brother and sister, or husband and wife, walking unostentatiously, and better to know the land through which they traveled, and as boy and girl they gave themselves wholly to their little moment.

At last they came to one of those charming wayside inns one finds in picturesque setting only in Southern lands.

"Let us rest here," Gordon said.

The landlord, in cap and apron, bustled out to meet them, with beaming countenance and many bows.

"We wish to rest in your garden," began Gordon, and then he turned to madame helplessly. "Do tell him to come for our order. I get all tangled up in my Italian."

Laughing, she acted as interpreter, and the voluble host showered on them a torrent of his native tongue, as he pointed to the vine-sheltered garden.

"What under heaven is he saying?" asked Gordon.

"He says that we shall find there a place to rest, and no people shall disturb, and on us he bestows all the blessings of all the saints of Italy."

"Good for him!" said Gordon, as a gold-piece changed hands and more blessings followed. "He is a Christian and a gentleman, this landlord. Come, dear lady."

The little inn garden was a veritable bower of roses with vineyards all around, and they found a corner with an open view over the valley and lake below. They stood for a moment to look down on the world they had left behind. The mountains shut off Brescia from sight, but to the south they thought they could discern the outlines of Verona. The clear waters of the lake were calmer than usual,

and, dark green on the northern border, rivaled the blue of heaven as they neared the citron gardens and olive groves of Limone. Bay and inlet curved gracefully out to narrow promontories, and here and there along the shores dancing cascades glistened white in the sunlight. Their day was peerless.

They turned away to each other, and he led her to a rustic bench formed from the vine of the grape.

"Our gods made ready for us, you see," he said; "I never knew before what dear, kind gods you have under Italian skies."

Madame laughed happily, and taking off her large hat, hung it on a rose-bush.

"Now I can look at you all day long," he said.

Almost shyly she raised her eyes to his.

"What shall I call you, monsieur?" she asked. "Your name I do not know."

"Philip Gordon."

"*Philippe, mon roi!*" she breathed softly.

"And yours?" he asked.

"*Mon ami*, will you not wait and know all in the good time? It is what I ask. Tonight my brother comes to Riga. You shall him meet, and before that I shall tell you who I am. It is not too hard a condition?"

"No," said Philip fiercely; "let us forget that you have a name. Let us have our day!"

Again the puzzled little frown gathered in her forehead at his words, but before she could speak the old landlord came stumping cheerfully down the path, singing a merry drinking song in token of his approach.

Philip gave the order in his stumbling Italian, and madame merrily acted as interpreter. But the jolly old man did not go. He stood with hands on his hips, staring at them in pleased sympathy and comprehension.

"The illustrious signore and signora are not long married?" he ventured finally.

"No, married only yesterday," answered Philip boldly, not venturing

to look at madame until he heard a soft little laugh and a whispered, "Bravo!" Then he raised her hand to his lips.

The landlord was almost beside himself with delight as he clumped back to the inn. They were so happy, these children. Ah, the dear love that the great God puts in the hearts of brave men and gentle women!

When he returned his wife clattered on before. Her tray was dressed with flowers and fruit, and made appetizing even for souls so ardently in love as this sweet bride and her *sposo novello*. On the man's tray were four glasses and a bottle of his best old wine. With deep prostrations he begged:

"Will the most gracious signore and signora permit that we who have known happiness pledge them for whom it now begins?"

The signore and signora were delighted, and rose to their feet to drink the toast. Taking off his cap the old man filled the glasses, then held his own on high and said:

"To the long life and the ever greater love and happiness! God and the Blessed Virgin grant to you and your children to be happy forever!"

Philip felt the quiver which passed through madame at these words, and, embarrassed himself, drank the toast, collecting his thoughts meanwhile for another, which he proposed in fairly good Italian:

"To the protector of travelers; the friend of lovers; the devoted husband of a beautiful wife."

The bows, the protestations, the thanks were overwhelming, and seemed to last all the way back to the inn; and for how long afterward Philip and madame did not care to imagine, lest they should lose another moment of their day.

"I think," said Philip after a little, "that such experiences as this come to few men and women in this life, else the world could not bear the happiness. I think I have been waiting always for this day—and you!"

"Yes," she answered. It seemed as if the words of the old landlord had

brought about a crisis, for she, too, spoke with sweet seriousness, without trace of coquetry, choosing her words with bewitching uncertainty. "Yes, I have been a girl. My father, he was Austrian, and my mother, she was of France. It was then that my life was made for me. I have married my father's friend, a count of Italy, and it was necessary that I have lived my life so as it was made. But often my heart has grown big and beat hard. The life has not held that of which I have need. Last night in the garden the world whispered of a difference. I could not support my heart—Oh!"

She ended with a little quivering sigh and turned her face away. Philip felt that he must be strong at that moment for them both. He spoke slowly, gravely:

"Madame, until this Summer my life has been gray and colorless—a futile, dreary round of dulness, and I never knew that all life was not a tragedy—an uninspired tragedy of gray conventions. Since I left it all behind to take a holiday in this old world little by little the paralysis has been thawed out of my heart, and yesterday before you came I began to feel like a boy again, and then like a lonely boy. I have never—what is your first name? Let me call you by that today?"

"Francine," she murmured.

"Francine, I have never really loved a woman. My whole life has been preparing me for the one great moment when I should find you, my queen, and lay at your feet a heart into which no other has entered."

He paused for a moment. She cast him a fleeting glance from under her lashes, but his eyes were fixed on the distant horizon, and he failed to see. He went on:

"I know I am a coward to tell you this since it must end here. I know I should have gone away without asking for this glimpse into heaven, but I could not. The madness of this wonderful day is in my veins—the madness of finding you—you! and I forget all else. I am so happy just in being near

you, just in the way your voice shakes all the heart in me, that I cannot realize what the loss of you will mean. I shall not always be content with the memory of perfection. God! how I shall starve for the sight of you, the touch of you!"

She turned her big dark eyes upon him, unutterable reproach and protest in their depths. He shivered, then sprang to his feet and walked up and down before her. She watched him, fascinated for a few moments, trying to grasp the meaning of his words. When at last she thought she understood she hid her face in her hands. Up and down he strode, up and down; then she heard the steps pause beside her; she felt him kneel at her feet.

"Francine," he murmured, "Francine! Tell me I am right. I can see only you, think only you! Tell me we must part."

She raised her face. It was quivering, her eyes heavy with love and longing as she unveiled herself for a moment, exquisite beyond all dreams in half-yielding womanhood. Then, panting for breath and courage, she whispered:

"But yes, truly. A man like you must ever do the right, *Philippe, mon roi!*"

Reverently he raised her hands to his lips:

"I never knew before why God made woman last. You crown the whole creation, my queen."

He rose and walked away. Giddy and faint he leaned against a tree, looking out over the valley below, seeing nothing, hearing only the gold of her words. At last he shut his eyes, wincing with the pain of victory. Then he went back to her. Her face was very white, and she greeted him with a brave, tired little smile, as she said:

"It is now good-bye to our day, is it

not so? It is necessary that you shall go back to the gray wife in Philadelphia?"

"Wife?" shouted Philip. "I haven't any wife! What do you mean?"

Her eyes grew big with indignation. "But, but," she panted, "what is it you have meant? Is it not so that you are married in America?"

"Married? I? No, by all the gods! It's you who are married. You told me so!"

She looked at him for a moment in amazed incredulity; then her laugh rang out joyously, mockingly, as she sprang to her feet and faced him.

"Oh, Philippe, Philippe, but yes, I am married, *mais je suis veuve, je suis veuve!*"

"A widow!" he roared. "Since when?"

"My honored husband died three years ago," she answered demurely, her eyes on the ground.

"Thank God! And you love me?"

"A little," she admitted.

"And you will marry me?"

"If my brother—" She hesitated for her word.

"If your brother approves of me?"

"But yes."

"And if he doesn't?"

He stood before her, stiff, erect, strong. It seemed a century before she raised her eyes to his, and another during which she searched his deepest soul. Then she sighed contentedly. A bewitching smile curled the corners of her mouth upward, as she murmured:

"But yes—of my own desire."

"God be praised!" he shouted, and caught her in his arms.

The old landlord, hearing the loud voice, clumped down the garden path till he saw them standing thus; then tiptoed back to his wife.

"The dear new married ones!" he explained, his finger on his lips.



AU VOLEUR!

By Gustave Geffroy

“**A**RRETEZ-LE!... Au voleur!... Au voleur!...
La foule poursuit un homme. Des gens crient, furieux, les yeux hors de la tête, sans savoir de quoi il s'agit.

Enfin, le voleur est pris. Un agent s'est trouvé là, qui a barré le chemin au fuyard.

L'homme, on ne le distingue pas d'abord. La cohue, accourue comme un ouragan et comme la mer qui monte, l'entoure, l'assaille, l'écrase. Des poings se lèvent, s'abattent. L'agent finit par calmer la tempête.

Une femme essoufflée sort des rangs.

— Monsieur l'agent, cet homme vient de m'arracher mon réticule en or... Voleur!... Voleur!... dit-elle au prisonnier. “Tiens!... Tiens!...”

Elle lève son parapluie et l'abat plusieurs fois sur l'individu tenu par l'agent. Celui-ci se fâche:

— Vous ne devez pas vous venger ainsi, madame!... Suivez-moi au poste pour faire votre déclaration.

La scène se passait devant un grand magasin. L'agent, le voleur, la dame volée se mirent en route pour le commissariat, situé dans une rue toute proche. La foule suivait. La dame continuait à geindre et à se fâcher, lançant à l'homme des regards courroucés.

— Pour sûr que je vais y aller au poste!... On devrait tous les prendre ces malfaiteurs, et les envoyer dans une île déserte!... qu'il n'en reste plus un sur le pavé de Paris!... Je me promenais bien tranquillement, mon sac en or à la main, quand je me suis sentie bousculée... Heureusement que j'ai vu le voleur!...

Le voleur ne disait mot. Il avait l'apparence d'un mendiant, d'un crève-la-faim. Jeune, maigre, des cheveux blonds filasse. Il semblait distrait, peu préoccupé de ce qui se passait autour de lui, des coups de poings et des coups de parapluie qu'il avait reçus, de la poigne de l'agent qui enserrait sans peine son bras mince. Il avait vu briller le sac, et il l'avait arraché aux mains qui le tenaient. Maintenant, il était pris. Puisqu'il cherchait un gîte et un morceau de pain, il les avait trouvés. Voilà tout.

On arriva au commissariat.

— Monsieur le commissaire est occupé, dit un employé.

La femme continua de parler et de gesticuler, semblable à une Furie poursuivant le Crime. Pour la dixième fois, elle recommença l'histoire de son sac en or.

— Oui!... il sera condamné!... La voie publique n'est plus sûre!... Volée!... volée en plein jour!... Nous ne sommes plus en sécurité.

L'agent regardait le sac en or qu'il avait saisi sous la blouse du voleur. Le voleur regardait ses pieds qui sortaient de ses chaussures. Les curieux, de la porte, regardaient ce qu'ils pouvaient apercevoir.

Enfin, M. le commissaire apparut à la porte de son bureau, reconduisant une femme élégante qui paraissait fort triste.

— Que voulez-vous, madame, disait le commissaire, il faut en faire votre deuil!... Tous les jours cela arrive!... Ce n'est pas l'habitude que les voleurs rapportent au commissariat les objets qu'ils ont volés...

— Je n'ai pas de chance, répondait la belle dame. Perdu d'un seul coup un

sac d'or, une montre, un bracelet et une bague.

Elle semblait prendre à témoin de sa malchance les personnes présentes.

— Ma voleuse! cria-t-elle tout à coup. Monsieur le commissaire, la voilà, c'est elle!... J'étais assise dans le magasin à essayer des gants, avec mon sac sur mes genoux... Elle l'a escamoté et a disparu... Mais j'ai eu le temps de la voir et je la reconnais... Et je reconnais mon sac!...

Ce fut une surprise générale. Le voleur releva la tête, intéressé par cette péripétie et eut un faible sourire.

La femme accusée, un instant abaissée, essaya de tenir tête à la nouvelle venue.

— Ce sac est à moi, monsieur le commissaire... Madame ne sait ce qu'elle dit... Il peut y avoir deux sacs pareils...

— Et même davantage, dit le commissaire. Mais nous allons bien voir.

Il prit le réticule.

— Qu'y a-t-il dans ce sac, madame? demanda-t-il à l'accusée.

— Une montre.

— Ce n'est pas difficile à deviner... Je viens de le dire, remarqua la seconde dame.

— Comment est cette montre? insista le commissaire.

— Toute en or, monsieur le commissaire, affirma l'interrogée.

— Pas du tout!!... sortie de petits diamants, rectifia la seconde dame.

Le commissaire exhiba la montre. C'était la seconde dame qui avait raison.

— Et le bracelet?

— Avec des diamants, dit l'une.

— Non, dit l'autre, tout en or.

Elle avait encore raison.

— Et la bague?

— Ah! zut! je ne sais plus! dit l'interrogée, abandonnant la partie.

— Puis, dit le commissaire, continuant l'inventaire du sac, il y a encore...

— Mon mouchoir, répondit la dame élégante, avec mon prénom brodé: "Mercedès," plus mon porte-monnaie avec quarante francs dedans.

— C'est juste, madame... Voici votre sac avec ce qu'il renferme... Laissez-

moi seulement votre adresse, afin de vous prévenir lorsqu'on aura besoin de votre déposition.

La dame acquiesça gracieusement, donna son adresse, et partit, heureuse et légère.

Le commissaire fit alors entrer dans son cabinet le voleur et la voleuse. Le voleur, après son accès de sourire silencieux, n'avait plus bronché. La voleuse semblait gênée, n'en menait pas large. Leur interrogatoire allait commencer, lorsqu'on apporta une carte au magistrat.

— Que ce monsieur entre!

Le monsieur entra, bien vêtu, correct, le type du riche et sérieux commerçant.

— Monsieur, dit le commissaire, je n'ai qu'une minute à vous donner... Je suis en affaire...

— Cela ne sera pas long, monsieur le commissaire... Il y a environ deux heures, est entrée dans ma boutique—je suis bijoutier-orfèvre, comme vous le voyez sur ma carte—est entrée, dis-je, une dame jeune, jolie, élégante, pour marchander divers objets. Comme elle était très bien mise, je lui ai fait voir ce qu'il y avait de mieux dans mes vitrines... Elle a tout regardé, a dit qu'elle reviendrait... Et elle est partie... et je me suis aperçu alors de la disparition d'un réticule en or, d'une montre sertie de diamants, d'un bracelet en or, d'une bague avec une émeraude... Tout cela est sans doute perdu... mais je devais vous faire ma déclaration... Le hasard est si grand!...

— Le hasard est venu, et il est reparti, dit le commissaire... Vous avez été volé trois fois, et vous seriez arrivé trois minutes plus tôt que vous rentriez dans votre bien. (Il lui raconta alors l'histoire surprenante du réticule et de son contenu.) Votre voleuse a été volée par madame, et madame a été volée par monsieur... Puis, votre voleuse est repartie avec votre bien que je lui ai rendu comme étant à elle.

Le voleur rit alors franchement de l'aventure.

— Calmez-vous, dit le commissaire, vous n'êtes pas ici pour vous amuser.

M. le commissaire sonna, donna à son

employé l'adresse de la dame au sac en or.

— Mme Mercédès Domino, rue de Rivoli... C'est tout près... Prenez votre vélo... Allez vite!...

L'employé revint quelques instants après:

— Inconnue à l'adresse indiquée!

— C'était à prévoir, dit le commissaire. Vous n'avez plus qu'une chance, monsieur, c'est que le sac soit revolé à Mme Mercédès, qu'elle revienne ici le chercher, et que l'on m'amène en même temps la voleuse, comme celle de tout à l'heure... Tiens!... où donc est-elle passée, au fait, celle de tout à l'heure?...

La voleuse s'était, en effet, glissée

hors du poste pendant tous ces pour-parlers. Il ne restait plus que le voleur. Celui-ci prit la parole et s'adressa au bijoutier:

— Il n'y a que vous et moi de refaits, lui dit-il simplement.

— Ma foi! il a l'air honnête, répondit indirectement le bijoutier, s'adressant au commissaire. Je devrais peut-être le prendre comme surveillant?

Il n'en fit rien. Et l'homme, quelques jours après, fut condamné à trois ans de prison et à cinq ans d'interdiction de séjour. Il fut cynique:

— Une autre fois, conclut-il, je volerais des honnêtes gens, si j'en trouve!... Il paraît que c'est difficile!



THE BLUE POLEMONIUM

By Arthur Stringer

WHERE far the great heights falter,
Where grim the clouds go by,
What bird were you, or whisper,
Once lost 'twixt earth and sky?

For flower I cannot call you,
Frail bell of skyey birth—
A kiss thrown up to heaven,
A sigh sent back to earth.

And dawn's first glow you pennon,
And eve's last golden bar,
Where pinnacled in Loneliness,
You storm lone sun and star!

Or, azure child of azure,
Born more of air than sod,
Are you but some lost angel,
Caught groping back to God?



WHIZ!

THE CHAUFFEUR (*examining his watch*)—The machine went over a mile that last minute.

THE TIMID PASSENGER—I went over my whole life.

QUIEN SABE?

By Vincent Harper

WHO knows? Perhaps it was the witchery of the tropic night; perhaps the whole thing was a dream, a nightmare born of my own vague horror. Those wondrous hazy weeks when I lay getting well on the veranda at Ngatipa—the British Residency among the foothills near Avarua—had left me rather muddled. Possibly I had no right to jump at the conclusion, which I have never since been able to drive out of my head, and should have talked it over with the colonel. But as I say, who knows?

All that I know is that when Muriel stole out into the moonlight and came and sat beside me, I felt that there could be only one possible excuse for her imprudence—she loved me. Alas! in twenty minutes she had told her story. Above the chaos of mad and bitter thoughts which naturally filled my mind, wild voices of the night cried out that it was he. Without the slightest effort to repel it, the sickening fact fastened itself upon me—and instantly the whole world died. The moon dropped back of the gigantic shoulder of gaunt Tekoe, plunging the wistful night into cold blackness. The dozing palms and shimmering banana fronds, robbed of their silver sheen, grew ghostly still. Far out upon the reefs the thunder of the surf died to a sullen moan. The frangipani and tieras and wild hibiscus, which had been filling the languorous night with subtle incense, emptied their chalices into the grave of Hope, and breathed no more. Muriel had vanished. I finished my cigar and went to bed.

It does not matter now—nothing

now matters—what all this meant to me, for this is not my story. By day-break I was gone. All that was left to me of Rarotonga was a huge cone—rose-kissed, of Tyrian purple—rising astern above the sapphire rim, and, as you know, I never have so much as dreamed of going back. But I confess, the thought of that poor girl, waiting and watching across the palm-tops in the valley to catch the gleam upon a sail which, if my guess was right, can never come, gets on my nerves. So do for heaven's sake give me your honest judgment. It is only because I wish to know how it strikes others that I now break my resolution never to tell the tale. Here it is, then. The facts are few enough and simple, but what's the answer?

Any lounge on the beach—"beach" is, you know, Pacificese for "Main street"—anybody can tell you where is the house of the elusive Chile sailmaker, in whose shipyard, if anywhere in Papeete, one may perchance find boats for hire. I say elusive, because although everyone knows where his house is, nobody—not even his black-eyed native wife squatting on the mat before the door, nor his black-eyed half-breed children peering at you through the chair placed barrier-wise across the door—can tell you (truthfully) when he will be at home, this elusive Chile sailmaker of Tahiti. Always he will return *ariana*—by-and-bye; yet comes he never, at all events not while one waits for him.

Since nothing is so plentiful in the South Seas as time, unless it be the willingness to waste it, the chances

are that the gesticulating gentleman, be he French or Maori, who courteously directs you to the shipyard will himself lead the procession of frankly inquisitive but delightfully urbane inhabitants who smilingly insist upon accompanying you thither. Very charming, very tropical, very French, were those excursions that I made that day along the crescent shore of the blue cove beyond the town, under the waxy-leaved burao trees and cocoanut palms. But night fell, after my seventh visit, with the pleasure of meeting the Chile sailmaker still in store for me. And the worst of it was that I must get a boat of some sort—or miss the chance of a lifetime.

"He coming back bimebye—*ariena, tout suite, muya priesa*," his wife assured me when I reached the shop shortly after dawn the next morning. Now when a lady lies so delightfully in three languages one is apt to believe her. I believed her, in spite of my experience of the previous day, and strolled across the road to have a look at the discouraging collection of impossibilities in the way of craft then in the yard, which I had had no opportunity to examine before. They were hopeless. Stove-in, dismantled, antique hulks, most of them, leisurely going to pieces where they lay hauled up high and dry, or rotting, the less decrepit among them, at their slimy moorings in the turquoise lagoon. Not one of these old arks could possibly be made fit. I did, however, make a note to come back some day to paint the ribs of the old barque stranded on the point.

Resolved to waste no more of my too little time, I was hurrying back to town, when I happened to look out across the upper harbor, and caught sight of a boat which I was positive had not been there the night before. There was almost pain in the realization of the strange vessel's fitness for my purpose. She might have been forty feet over all, yawl-rigged, as roomy as a houseboat, yet with speed carved clearly, fore and aft, in her exquisite sheer. The trim spars and rigging were evidently brand-new, and the canvas of

her was manifestly freshly bent on and of excellent quality. Also it took no expert eye to read "made in America" stamped all over her. It was too good to be true. But my delight was short-lived, for, of course, this dainty toy must be some lucky dog's private yacht; that she was to be had for love or money was unthinkable.

I accordingly resumed my trudge along the sands, keeping my weather eye on the tormenting apparition as she swam in the streak of burnished gold athwart the turquoise and pea-green of the harbor, but when I reached the string of dories by the copra shed curiosity got the better of my philosophy, and I jumped into one of them, and presently was sculling out to challenge fortune, lest such a providence go by default.

No one was visible aboard the sloop, so I made bold to get a peep into her cockpit and, dimly, into her spacious cabin. As I drew myself around her stern by grasping the polished taffrail I stooped to read her name. It finished me.

DRIFTWOOD

of
Sausalito

Driftwood! At last I had it—the name that had, for months, been floating vaguely in my sub-conscious mind! Beeton's story that night at the Press Club—about the queer chap he had run across at Honolulu—kept me in 'Frisco longer than any of them knew, but although I crossed the bay to Sausalito at least a dozen times, and hung about the yachtsmen nosing for clues, I failed to get a line on anyone who ever heard of the mysterious craft. *Driftwood!* That was the name, I now would take my oath, although Beeton himself, as far as I remember, had never mentioned it. It was the name of names that such a man as he described must have hit on—it fit the hero of "The Sapphire Sink" like a glove. Yes, and here she was, for there could hardly be two boats named *Driftwood* hailing from Sausalito. For a sentimental moment or two I forgot my urgent envy and

thought only of Beeton's story. When at last the spell of the name was broken, and I shoved off, I was about to begin my disconsolate voyage back to the beach, when a head was poked out of the galley hatch amidships, and I saw that my impertinent, if not suspicious, nearness to the yacht had been observed. The man who was looking rather wearily at me from under the shadow of his broad-brimmed pandanus leaf hat was as brown as a native and as dignified. The Maori cook, I judged, or perhaps the usual mongrel South Sea sailor. His beck stopped me like an arrest, and I paddled alongside somewhat guiltily.

"*Marooroo!*" I sang out, lifting my hat after the ceremonious fashion of the Tropics.

"Oh, cut it, cut it out, beloved," protested the man, the strong lines about his mouth seeming to intend a smile, which, however, died of fatigue. The accent was United States.

"What? Hail from God's country, eh?" I laughed.

"You evidently do, since you ask questions. Never do that, my brother, south of the Line! Come aboard. Just dressing—up in a jiffy—make yourself at home," he said, with another abortive smile; and the head disappeared below.

Making fast the dory astern, I swung myself aboard and waited for my find—a rich one, I already knew—to complete his toilet. Presently he reappeared at the after companionway, fully dressed in a pair of baggy white cotton trousers. Sprawling full length along the deck, he pulled the brim of his hat down over his keen, sad, strangely appealing eyes, until the edge of it rested on the tip of his long, thin nose, and studied me curiously for a whole minute. Just as I was beginning to feel embarrassed by his decidedly frank stare of critical scrutiny, he seemed to reach a satisfactory conclusion concerning me, for he closed his eyes, rolled over on his back, and began to talk to me with delicious ease.

"Painter fellow—heard about you yesterday—want a boat—here she is—

how do you like her, and when do you start?"

"Hold on!" I broke in. "I want a boat all right, and this one's it, but who owns her, and what's the price, and first of all, who are you?"

"Questions again!" he murmured, not with sufficient spirit to make it a rebuke, but as though he were mildly complaining to the stars. "As I feared—a stranger to the Sink! Here, sir, a gentleman is not embarrassed by antecedents; here Yesterday is drowned at sunset every evening; here, consequently, there is no Past. When do you weigh anchor?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I did not intend to ask any impertinent questions," I assured him, his allusion to the "Sink" giving me the uncanny suspicion that I had discovered the hero of Beeton's creepy tale; "but really, you know, it might be well to give me some idea of the price. I shall need the boat only a few days—a month at most."

"Or until you reach Penrhyn, why don't you say, since that's where you're bound. Done! Let's say ten dollars a day, or a lump sum of one hundred and clear these hungry sharks' teeth here on the next tide at noon."

"Ten a day is rather stiff—that is, if you mean American; if Chile, it's a go."

"I mean good U. S. dollars, all right—dirt cheap, too, when you consider that I go with the boat."

"You—go with the boat—what as?" I exclaimed, warming to the fellow, who remained flat on his back, with his eyes shut, and speaking always as if addressing nobody in particular.

"As Critic," he replied. "I ship as Critic—you need one, you know. Art is long, and criticism (as at present embodied in me) is short, yes, deucedly short, not to say stony broke. Also I would to Penrhyn myself—not because it is Penrhyn, but because it is not here. So it's heave ho! at floodtide, then! I smoke only the best—when you lay in the stores. A man and a boy will be crew enough. I'll furnish the dog."

That settled it. Such a mate alone

would have been worth the ten *per diem*. Long before noon I had signed my crew—a hulking Lascar, surly and dumb, and a native lad named Kiki. I found the good ship *Driftwood* in stores for a month—"Quien Sabe," the mate, would give me no other name—providing the dog, a knowing collie, according to contract. And we cleared the reefs at the turn of the tide. By night we had rounded the point of Morea, and set our course point-blank for Penrhyn, with the sheets paid out to scoop in the puffs of the rapidly dying Southeast Trades. When I went below at eleven o'clock I feared that I would find things gone dead flat when I relieved "Quien Sabe" at four in the morning. And it was so. Good Lord! For the whole of that endless, killing week we rose and fell on the long, low, lazy sapphire swells, not even drifting, except astern.

But that week was not quite barren for me. I made the acquaintance of Mate "Quien Sabe." As I had from the very first surmised, he proved to be a man of singularly fine fiber and whimsical bent, who chose, for some reason or other, to drift aimlessly about the Tropics. It was easy to detect that everything about the fellow—his weary air, his disjointed poses, his quaint philosophy, his very tone and accent—was a disguise, worn, moreover, with no little difficulty and discomfort. But while, as I say, the cap and bells and glaring motley were plainly evident, for the life of me I could not make even a wild guess as to what sort of man he was, who had so curiously donned them. My early and delicate attempts to extract at least some general statements from him were deftly turned aside with a shrug of his eloquent shoulders, and that smile which was always still-born, and the quizzical "Quien Sabe?" which ended all of our talks. For the rest, we got on famously together, for my mate was the best read man I have ever met, and where beauty or art or poetry or the deep things of life were concerned his soul was an exposed nerve. He simply had "let go"! He had quit—everything!

September, 1906—9

Something—love or despair or remorse, or the sheer inability to bear the terrible burden of life—something had cut him adrift from purpose. And the fellow could not have been over thirty. A riddle, my mate.

Very soon abandoning all efforts to read the riddle, by the end of that endless week of drifting I had come to yield more and more easily to the fascination which "Quien Sabe" did certainly exercise over me, but it was not until the ninth day out from Tahiti that the man and his secret, whatever it was, got a grip on my mind, a grip I have never been able to break. That day must forever confront me with wonder. Let me tell you exactly what happened.

I was dozing below in my bunk, at perhaps half-past six in the morning, when I heard the mate's bare feet pattering hurriedly along the deck. Now, as he never moved at all, except under urgent stress, and as excitement over anything was foreign to his nature, I got up on my elbow to listen with both ears. He did not sing out to the crew—the man and a half and a dog—who were snoring forward on the anchor chains, however, as he must have done had the wind showed signs of repentance and resumed business, so I dropped back upon my pillow and waited for the splash to corroborate my theory—that the heat had affected "Quien Sabe's" reason, and he was about to exert himself sufficiently to take a plunge.

There was no splash nor further patter of bare feet, and I was left to make whatever sleepy deductions I saw fit from the mate's unaccountable outbreak of energy. But when even the Trades, the old reliable Southeast Trades, have failed you flat for a puffless week; when you're drifting nowhither on sapphire swells into which the sheet—paid out to the very knot at the end—dips to cool off with each pant of the sea; when all sound has been drowned in the welter of silence, except when the rudder grunts "chock!" at a lurch; on the loneliest reach of the South Pacific, where the only thing

that could possibly matter is just the one thing that can't possibly be—a sail—why, then "Quien Sabe," for all that I cared, might dance himself to the very deuce with his barefoot hornpipe up on deck, for I was asleep.

"Where's Old Glory, Cap?" asked the mate, shaking me after I had dreamed a long time and slept perhaps two minutes.

"With the signal flags in the starboard cuddy; but what's up now?" I replied, stretching myself and looking at him.

"Don't quite know yet," he muttered as he took out the flag. "Auxiliary schooner—queerish lines—about to ignore us—gasoline wheezer—about six knots—ought to be at least tobacco in the incident—better come aloft."

"But great Scott, man, get into your togs. May be women aboard, and—" I stopped, for the cotton drawers had disappeared up the companionway. Hoping that there was yet time for me to have my dip into the sea before getting into the perspiration and fine linen in which I must do the honors at my rail, I took an observation through the galley hatch. Too late! The stranger had just come about and was bearing down on us, not a mile off our port bow. I had not even located my shirt-studs when the gasoline engine gave a final gasp, and presently I heard the reverberating roll of r's built on the Clyde, as the skipper of the schooner hailed us. I knew my mate. The interview between him and the Scot would certainly be worth while. Diversion was at a premium anyhow, so I stayed below and watched from my conning tower, the galley hatch.

"What's wrong? Out of grrub?" rumbled the skipper heartily.

"No-o," murmured "Quien Sabe" softly, primeval fatigue in his tone and the stem of his briar pipe between his tightly closed lips.

"Out o' water maybe?" pursued the Scot, cocking up a quizzical eye at our peak.

"No-o," murmured my mate again, this time with a falling inflection which seemed to indicate that, so far as he

was concerned, the interview was at an end.

"Out o' your course, then?" suggested the Scot, fetching his eye from aloft to study the mate, who stood leaning against the swaying boom, puffing meditatively, with folded arms, half-shut, dreamy eyes and an air of tranquil resignation.

"No-o," murmured "Quien Sabe" a third time after a thoughtful pause. "Out of touch with public opinion, out of key with the music of the spheres, perhaps, but not out of my course, thank you."

"Ho, I say, ye arren't no cool cup o' tea, arre ye?" roared the Scot, while even his crew of stoical Maoris showed their gleaming teeth. The skipper looked from my mate to my peak, and then from the peak to the mate, and then said, "Say, ye'rre all rricht!"

"An opinion, sir," replied "Quien Sabe," with a grave bow, "which I have found it difficult to impress upon mankind; ergo, thanks!"

"And what for do ye fly distress, then?" asked the Scot, as sternly as if issuing orders from his bridge. "That's no' a prrroper game for men to play on the high seas, mon."

I shot an anxious look up at our peak, and sure enough, Old Glory hugged the halyards, bottom side up. "Quien Sabe" leisurely filled and lighted his pipe before replying.

"Ah! My distress was caused by dread lest the tobacco which the Government furnishes you is no better than that which we have; however, if you will jettison a few tins of it, and say that you forgive me, I will forgive you."

The necessary commands were belated, and soon considerable Government tobacco had been transhipped from the *Countess of Ranfurly* to the *Driftwood*, the while the Scot sat on his rail and puffed, and "Quien Sabe" sat on our rail and puffed, with an occasional interchange of expressions of distinguished consideration. And the joy of my life was deepened.

"Ye arren't alone, arre ye?" asked the skipper when the tobacco deal was closed.

"Dear me, no! Got a dog—cat, too—excellent company, a dog and a cat. Three other humans aboard also—those two objects for'ard on the anchor chains, and another specimen below—artist—great ass—very fond of me."

"You'll do, sir, you'll do!" roared the Scot, very red and hearty.

"Once more, thanks!" bowed the mate, and the puffing was resumed.

"Where from, where bound, and what in?" inquired the skipper, running a critical eye along the *Driftwood's* water-line.

"From the Past—to Penrhyn—in pearls," replied "Quien Sabe" as if announcing the death of his mother.

"To Penrhyn!—with pairruls?" cried out the Scot, the instinct of the old pearl-trader betraying him from the philosophic mind proper to a Government officer. "Arre ye clean daft, mon? Pairruls is a glut to Penrhyn, pairruls is."

"Pearls of thought, brother," gently protested the mate; "gems of feeling, you know, jewels of imagination—ideas to wit, ideas!"

"Ideas, is it?" laughed the skipper of the *Countess*, presumably reaching the conviction that the odd Yankee fish was laughing at him, for he bawled something that scattered the row of shining brown faces from along the rail, and presently I smelled the fumes of gasoline, and the schooner was wearing away from us, flinging a bubbling streamer of foam astern. My mate stood motionless against the boom until the *Countess of Ranfurly* had got well under way, when he sang out a farewell to the skipper and asked him if wind grew hereabouts.

"Wind?" bellowed back the skipper. "Ye'll be maybe gettin' a bit more o' wind than ye want before sundown, for the glass has dropped fra thirty to twenty-eight within twenty-four hours. But annyhow, the current here awa sets plumb sou'west, so ye can drift to Rarytongy in a scant sax hours—drift, mind, drift, ye and your bloomin' pairruls!"

Drift! The word seemed to sting "Quien Sabe" like a gunshot. I heard

him mutter "Rarotonga!" with a curse, but while I was still wondering at these most unusual manifestations of feeling, and speculating as to their possible meaning, he regained his customary air of bored indifference. He swung himself upon the boom and lay back in the roomy bulge on the idle sail, and whistled softly when not puffing away at his pipe. But during that instant's laying aside of the motley I had got my first real glimpse at the fellow's self. In the wistful, hungry, piteous look that he sent after the schooner I thought that I could detect proof of my vague half-guess at the thing he was. He was, I began to feel convinced, the victim of some transcendent aim, not the aimless, rudderless wreck I thought him. Like the helpless devil in Beeton's tale, "Quien Sabe" might now be nearing the wide first swirls of the "Sapphire Sink," that vortex of infinite hunger for life, for knowledge, for light and for love, which yawns between poets and truth. At all events that look of his was a wild, wordless cry for help and for rest. I must break somehow into that man's soul. There he sat as I watched him, a speck of desire on a sea of denial, drifting no-whither, God knows why. Without waiting to think out just how I would best go about it, I grabbed up a rough towel and went up on deck.

"What the deuce was the row about, anyhow?" I asked "Quien Sabe" as I stripped.

"Government schooner—Cook Islands, you know. Fine old chap, the skipper. Smokes beastly tobacco, though. Says we can drift to Rarotonga in six hours, and that the glass reads weather before sundown. Come, dip, and be quick about it, for I want to talk."

I dove and was up again in half a minute, and rubbed down fast, for in spite of his effort to seem offhand, I saw that "Quien Sabe" was playing his part with the utmost uneasiness. I must talk to him now while this mood was on him, for who could say how long it might last. Once in my silk attire again, I lighted my pipe and sat

beside him, but we puffed in silence for fully five minutes. "Quien Sabe" spoke first, abruptly.

"I'm a damned fool, Cap," he began. "I'm the damnedest fool in the business."

"There are others," I answered, "but now deduce."

"What the hell are you doing down here anyhow?" he asked me, after a long pause, and with that annoying way he had of suddenly changing the subject. I hesitated a moment, and as he was wont to do, he went on without waiting for my reply: "What do you know of this Sapphire Sink that you are always talking about?"

"Why, nothing, of course, except that story. What do you know about it?"

"I know that the story is true—that is, I mean, the suction of hell is in the Tropics—and my advice to you is, get out while you can. I know what I'm talking about, too, Cap. What chance has a man to mix his paints where God Almighty mixes His? Do you think your pitiful daubs will go, once you have seen what color *is*, once you have known what God's light means? Do you dare believe that you can go back, once you have watched God making the Summer? Do you dream you can work like a grub in the dirt, once you have known what it is to drift forever and ever and ever again over infinite reaches of languor and sense? Hear one who knows what it is to feel the slow, the exquisite suction of hell, one of the lost, who alone can know."

He stopped and refilled his pipe, and then went on, speaking slowly and as if chanting.

"When the seven seas shall give up their dead, the wreckage from none will be found so weird as that cast up by the South Pacific. The reefs round these myriad mystical isles are strewn with the corpses of madmen and knaves—the only two kinds of white men who come here. Men starved by Actual, cramped by Fact, drift hither to drown in the maelstrom of dreams. Men restless, and rebels, and poets

choked in a world that insists on 'the Thing as It is,' drift hither to *feel*, to feel, feel, feel, to forget about *doing*, and simply feel! These men think to end with the hand of Time the veil of Eternity, thinnest here—forgetting man cannot see God and live. Yes, here drift the madmen. But hither drift also the hounded ones whom crime has branded and cast away, drift to and fro on these lost South Seas, under false colors, false names, false clearance papers, to drink and gamble and lie and steal and go to smash on the reefs of woman. So, sooner or later, they all go down, these drifters here in the Sapphire Sink. Hungry for heaven, or fleeing from hell, to the South Seas drift only vagabond souls—the poet to die of the too much living, the swine to rot in the noisome swamp of tropical vices lush and dank."

"Quien Sabe" opened his eyes when he ceased his gruesome dirge, and with a strange, groping gesture of appeal he seemed about to cry out to the Spirit of the Tropics to set him free, but instead he sprang to his feet with a burst of uproarious laughter, and before I knew what he was about he had yanked me off the boom and was waltzing me around the deck.

"Let's see, what were we talking about just now, Cap?" he asked when at last we had sat on the boom again. "Oh, yes! I was saying that I am a damned fool, I remember. Well, I am, Cap. You've been awfully decent about not asking me questions—spared me a lot of lying, you know—and it's no jolly when I tell you that you're the first man that I ever felt tempted to tell the truth to. Confidentially, then, the secret of my mysterious life is—I'm a damned fool!"

"As I said before," I replied, with a laugh which I hoped would tend to keep him in his new and amazing mood, "there are others—one other on this very boat."

"Yes, I had observed that," he answered, with superb simplicity, "but one fool differeth from another fool in foolishness, and I am no common-or-garden idiot like you, Cap, but the only

original all-around imbecile, the bright, particular freak, the nuttiest bug-house product that ever preferred moonbeam chasing to three square meals a day. That's right."

"See here, old man, if you talk like that, I'll begin to ask questions," I laughed.

"It's God's straight truth, all the same."

"Then why don't you brace up? Why don't you pull out?"

"Brace up? Pull out? It's easy to talk! Jehovah! Man, you make me tired. I have braced up—yes, a thousand times. I have pulled out—but what's the use? The suck of this pit tugs at my feet, however high I may lift my head, and back I drift from the ends of the earth. Oh, you needn't look wise, for it isn't rum, nor women, nor cards, nor dope, nor crime, but just sheer, infinite, glorious, drunken love—of *this!*"

He stretched his arms wide to embrace the light, to fondle the sea, to kiss the sky.

"I just *can't* break away from this endless drift," he went on after a little, "and if ever a man had something to strive for, something to work for, something to win, then I am that man. Good God, Ashburton, two years ago I made the break that I swore would wake the man Who Can within me. I went to Frisco and got a job, I stayed with purpose, began to make money. In another year I could have won out—won manhood and her and self-respect. But here I am—drifting again, and glad to drift. Of course it will end as all lives end down here in the thrall of this lethal rapture. As yet I have been constant to feel, to cram eternities into minutes, to do nothing, want nothing, plan nothing, but feel. My hour will come, however. One terrible, sudden, awful hour will come when I least expect it, when all that is meant by these dreams of life will appear to cost but a single crime—and I'll pay the price, I will do the deed, for a starving man reckes nothing of cost. And the mouth of the Sapphire Sink will yawn, and the sirens of sloth will shriek with joy when

they see me sucked through the hellish funnel."

"Land ho!" Before I could answer, the Lascar sang out—our dancing had waked him some minutes before—and we all turned round to look. Coming up over the edge of the sea were the mountains of Rarotonga, and while we were still watching them slowly rise, a ripple broke across the mirror, followed by innumerable furrows and then more furrows, until the southeast fairly danced with the scurrying white-caps. In three minutes we were sailing, close-hauled, on the starboard tack, straight for the rising cones, on a rapidly stiffening six-knot breeze. I went below to dress, leaving "Quien Sabe" at the wheel. The wind held well, so that it could not have been long after noon when the *Driftwood* was off the reefs. Under the lee of the towering mountains the wind fell flat, and as we were some three miles to the eastward of the wretched harbor of Avarua, the grumbling Lascar was put at the sweep, and we crawled along the shore, just outside the reefs. Here and there among the thickets we saw native wharries under great mapi trees, and mangoes and breadfruit, while everywhere the tufts on the tall coconut palms swayed lazily above the beach. Gradually the huts and wharries appeared closer together, and then the more pretentious houses with iron roofs, as we drew near the town.

A dragging hour or so had passed, when I caught sight of a canoe making out across the wide lagoon, driven by a tall Maori boy wearing only the *pariu*—a strip of gaudy print about the loins—and chatting like a monkey with his only passenger, a girl in European dress, holding a parasol over her head. Here was a diversion indeed, and I told the sweating Lascar to hold his oar until I could learn the business of the canoe. At the first sight of the lady "Quien Sabe" had discreetly fallen flat on the deck, where, since his attire was scarcely more complete and far less attractive than that of the native boy, he lay modestly hidden from view. In a few seconds the canoe was

beached on the reef, and the girl disembarked and remained standing on the rather precarious ledge, while the lad dexterously ported the canoe over it into the open sea. Leaving his fair passenger on the reef, the young Maori paddled out to where we lay, about a quarter of a mile off shore, and as he shot alongside he stood up and held out his hand, saying: "Heap good one. How much you giffing for him?"

He grinned knowingly as he rolled about on the palm of his outstretched hand a pearl of superb size and beauty. From where he lay on the deck "Quien Sabe" could look straight down into the canoe, and a cry of surprise and delight came from him as he saw the pearl. Even the usually dumb Lascar grunted in astonishment, while little Kiki and I also leaned over the scuppers to look.

"How much you giffing for him?" asked the boy again.

"Great Scott!" I exclaimed. "Why, mate, that pebble is worth a small fortune. Never saw such a beauty in my life. Just my luck, for I've only a few Mexican dollars and a letter of credit, which is no good here."

"Go slow," whispered "Quien Sabe," familiar with pearl deals and Maoris. "He stole it, of course, and all dollars look alike to him. Don't waste any bait."

I remember now that I had an uncomfortable feeling that "Quien Sabe," for once, was not talking in his usual strain of irresponsible chaffing, and I didn't quite like the look in his eye as he sized up the probable value of the pearl; but as my cash in hand reduced me to the necessity of following his advice, I played the limit and said, "I'll give you ten dollars Mexican."

"Ten?" shouted the boy, with a derisive laugh. "Heap good one; worth—plenty!"

The Lascar, who had been watching the parley as he stood leaning on the dripping sweep which he held upright on the deck, whispered something in Maori to the boy with the pearl.

"Shut up! Go forward!" snapped "Quien Sabe," voicing my own un-

easiness at the interest that the Lascar was showing in the pearl, which, since the ugly brute was the only capitalist on board, might prove deucedly unpleasant.

"Ha!" cried the keen little trader, "him say him giffing twenty. Supposing you giffing fifty?"

"By Jove!" I said to "Quien Sabe," "I don't like that fellow's face much at any time—just look at it now. Slip down and get my revolver, will you, while I jolly the kid."

"Quien Sabe" acquiesced with a laugh, and was up on deck again in a moment—not too soon either, for the Lascar, after lurching forward, surly and growling, had come aft and was standing threateningly a few feet from where I lay on the deck with my elbows on the rail as I talked with the trader, who warily refused to let me take the pearl, skilfully keeping the canoe just out of my reach. Again the Lascar muttered something to the boy in Maori, and the lad sheered the canoe off with a frightened look. I ordered the burly giant to go below and to stay there, and he was turning to obey me, when he suddenly wheeled about and seizing the heavy sweep with both his hands, he swung it with terrific force in a broad circle above his head before aiming the blow at me. It missed me, for I flattened out on the deck as the blade of the oar flew at me, but it caught the boy standing in the canoe, striking him squarely on the back of the head. The poor little beggar collapsed without a groan and toppled out of the canoe, which turned turtle and sank.

"Quien Sabe" was at the side in a second, his eyes lit up with an expression which God grant I may never again see in any man's eyes. He tossed the pistol to me, steadied himself for an instant, and then crying out, "My hour is come!" dived after the boy, whose descent could be traced by a thin wavy streak of red and certain other ghastly evidence that the blow had crushed his skull. The Lascar stood as if dead, while I, after my first horror, tried to wave reassurance to the girl who was

shrieking hysterically on the reef. After an interminable time "Quien Sabe" rose to the surface and scrambled upon the deck.

"Too late," he croaked hoarsely. "The boy is dead. Here, give me the gun, and I'll run below and get on something dry." I hesitated about surrendering the pistol, but a glance at the Lascar reassured me. He was standing motionless and stupefied on the spot where he had dealt the deadly blow. The whites of his eyes had turned blood-red, his lips were drawn, his muscles bunched like a wildcat's before the leap, but the paralysis of terror plainly made the murderer powerless. "Quien Sabe" ran below, and at the time I paid no particular attention to his revolting air of jocularity, nor even noticed that there was anything uncanny about the cruel laugh with which he bounded down the companionway.

Meanwhile, other eyes had been watching the tragedy from the shore, and a swarm of canoes and a naphtha launch now came skimming across the lagoon toward the place where the girl had finally fallen in a swoon on the reef. Once or twice "Quien Sabe" stuck his head out of the hatch and said something or other to me, but beyond a vague feeling of disgust and surprise at his ill-timed banter, I thought nothing of it. Attracted by the cries of the horde of natives rapidly nearing the reef I relaxed my watchfulness toward the Lascar, and was turning to try to catch what the man in the launch was shouting to me, when I saw a wild look of alarm on "Quien Sabe's" face as he cried to me, "Quick! Quick! The brute means murder!"

Before I could turn to look at the Lascar, "Quien Sabe" had fired through the open hatch, and the body of the giant tottered against me, not, however, before he had buried his sheath-knife between my shoulders. I felt the sting of a white-hot point running through me, a sickening darkness shut out the light, and I stumbled forward and fell beside the corpse of the Lascar.

When I awoke—after a million years, it seemed—I found myself lying on a cot on what appeared to be the veranda of some planter's house. The roof of corrugated iron over my head, and the rather flimsy construction of the house indicated that it was merely a tropical bungalow of the simplest sort, but there were not wanting evidences of refinement, if not of luxury, around me. Turkish rugs, hanging baskets of flowers, a table littered over with magazines and books, and a dainty tea service on a tabouret, all spoke of comfort and elegance. For some time after regaining my senses I lay too weak and contented to do more than take a sleepy interest in my surroundings, and only the haziest notions as to how I had come there and what had happened during my long exile floated through my mind. But presently I became aware that a fan of peacock's feathers was being lazily passed to and fro above my head by someone sitting behind me. Still, I was too blissfully indifferent to feel any curiosity. The whole world seemed to be asleep, and the scent of strange flowers came up out of the garden, and I fancied I could hear the murmur of the surf far off on some fringe of reefs. This was certainly the Tropics—and that was enough. Also I was tired and sleepy and free from pain, so nothing could matter.

Suddenly, however, I remembered the *Driftwood*, and I must have started, for the fan ceased swaying above my head. I lay wondering a moment, and then a girl—the very one who had seen it all, that day on the reef so long ago—leaned forward in her rocking-chair and said, in a mellow and gentle English voice, "Well, Mr. Ashburton, how are you today?"

I found that speaking was a difficult affair, so I only waved the thin white hand that I discovered belonged to me, and the girl pulled her chair around where I could see her. I thought I had never seen such a wistful face, never heard such a sad, strange voice.

"Now, you're not to talk until you are better," said the girl, "which will be very soon if you are good and do as

aunt bids you. This is the Residency, you know, at Rarotonga, and I am Muriel, Colonel Westover's niece. Uncle has gone over to Aitutaki for a few days, but aunt and I will take the best of care of you. Do you feel any pain?"

I shook my head and tried to smile, and then began to realize the situation clearly.

"Where is 'Quien Sabe'?" I asked, "and did the Las—?" But she held a finger to her lips, and evidently supposing that I was delirious again, she tip-toed around the corner of the veranda, and I dozed off.

As I said at the start, this is not my story, so I'll not dwell at length on all that took place in those wondrous hazy weeks that followed. Bit by bit I picked up the story of what had occurred after I lost consciousness. It seems that shortly after they had removed me from the sloop, the hurricane predicted by the skipper of the Government boat broke with terrific fury, and together with all the shipping then in the harbor, the *Driftwood* dragged her anchor and was ground to pieces on the reefs. "Quien Sabe" had been warned in plenty of time, but after getting Kiki, our native deck-hand, safely ashore he himself returned to the doomed *Driftwood* and must have perished with her, for no trace of him had been found since the storm. From Penrhyn, Tom Thorn-dyke wrote that he would bring his yacht to Rarotonga as soon as it was reported that I was fit to start on the two years' voyage, the promise of which had brought me to the South Seas, and I consequently settled down to the business of getting well as quickly as possible.

And what weeks those were! When she was not beside me reading to me, or, better yet, talking to me, in that strangest voice that ever was, Muriel was sure to be just where I could see her at work among the flowers. In ways beyond all understanding the girl began to grow upon me, until she seemed to be—to have been always—the nameless mystic, final thing, the

need of which had made my life the aimless, hollow, hungering failure that it was. All the South Seas had gradually been wringing from my soul, of wordless yearning, now seemed to be incarnate in that girl—answer to heart's cry, light in the dark, secret of music's self, end of life's drift. Little by little I came to realize that it was here, in the remoteness of this perfect peace, in the nameless thrall of this exquisite rest, with the scent of the flowers, the cool, still flowers, and the sob of the sea, the crossed, last sea, around us, that she and I, in the hush of the night, *must* soon know the truth in its fullness.

But this is not my story. I was lying half-asleep in the hammock one afternoon, when who should come on the veranda but Kiki, who, I supposed, was back in Tahiti long since. He grinned as he came up to me, and peered cautiously through the open windows into the house. I greeted him heartily and assured him that everybody else was away from home. It was only then that he crept to my side and handed me a note and a small package, both of them addressed to me in "Quien Sabe's" scrawling hand. I snatched them from Kiki's hands, and tore open the note, which was brief, but it said enough. It ran:

DEAR CAP: In the accompanying package you will find the pearl which you liked so much. I stole it from the dead boy—I plunged in the Sapphire Sink to steal it, not, as you doubtless supposed, to try to save the youngster. Well, it's all done now. You see, with the ten thousand dollars that I could get for that pearl, I meant to capture the pearl of great price of which I told you. But long before I reached the surface of the Sink, with the dead lad's loot clutched in my hand, I heard the laugh of the sirens. So it was a thief's end that awaited me during all these years of drifting! Did I not tell you my hour would come? And now what shall I find on the other side, now that I've found only hell on this? Is eternity hunger? God a dream? Quien sabe?

While I was still trying to persuade myself that the poor devil had written the heart-sickening note while under the same insane impulse that drove him to practical suicide only an hour or two afterward, the colonel returned

unexpectedly from the tennis tournament, and asked me if I felt well enough to let him talk to me about something that had been on his mind. I was only too glad of the diversion, and the bluff old gentleman thereupon blurted out that both he and Lady Wilmer had observed my growing attachment for Muriel, and that he felt it to be his duty to request me to take my departure as early as possible—the *Countess of Ranfurly*, he said, was sailing tomorrow at dawn—and thus avoid inevitable unhappiness.

"Understand, my dear fellow," went on the colonel, shaking my hand warmly, "that we have only the highest regard for yourself, but there are reasons why you, as an honorable man, must not allow Miss Westover to become aware of your possible attachment. It would be cruel."

One reason—my present and prospective penury—would have sufficed to prevent any attempt to discuss the delicate question with the stern old stickler for convention, so I thanked him for his frankness, assured him that nothing of a sentimental nature had passed between his niece and me, and it was settled that I was to sail on the Government schooner for Penrhyn the next morning.

You may imagine my uneasiness, therefore, when Muriel came out on the veranda that night after everybody but myself had gone to bed. For a delirious moment I yielded to the wild belief and hope that she had known of my passion and was determined to defy her uncle by giving me this opportunity to speak to her. But in a few minutes it was all over. The brave, sad, wondrous girl told me her story. She told me frankly that she could not

permit me to go away without some word of explanation of her apparent indifference to the love which she had just begun to realize that I had for her. There was another, she said, a painter like myself, who was one day to come and claim her. He had been totally misunderstood by everybody, but she knew that one day he would conquer, one day he would return, master of his destiny, lover and knight and man. Then she fled back into the house, and I finished my cigar and went to bed.

There is the story. What do you make of it? Were "Quien Sabe" and the hero who was to come some day one and the same? And was either of them the odd fish that Beeton ran across at Honolulu? Poor Beeton's death down in Manila ended all my hope of being able to get some sort of a connected history of his man, and although Tom Thorndyke and I spent pretty much the whole of that year trying to find somebody in each of the scores of South Sea islands that we visited, who had known something about the mate of the *Drijtwood*, all that we ever learned was that a sloop of that name had been abandoned on one of the remote atolls on the Pomatous, by its owner, who must have been drowned or starved later, and that the boat had afterward disappeared mysteriously. Come, then, what do you make of it all? Sometimes I have been tempted to believe that "Quien Sabe" was nothing more nor less than the spirit of the South Seas, the spirit that slowly but surely enervates and damns the strongest who venture to drift too close to the swirl of the Sapphire Sink. But after all, who knows?



THE REASON

THE YOUTH—Why is it that so many marriages are unhappy?
THE SAGE—Because there are so many marriages.

THE TERRACE DINNER

By Pomona Penrin

CAMILLA coming down the staircase of the huge old Long Island country home, always felt like a princess. This was reasonable, since she looked very like one. And on a particular evening in deep Summer she looked, in her long blue gown, with the turquoise tiara, so unmistakably the princess that Holman, standing in the lighted hallway, noticed the resemblance—noticed, perhaps one should say, for the hundredth time; but he had never before felt the inclination to say so. To tell the truth, his impulse to speech considerably startled him.

"Miss Camilla," he said none the less, "you look like a princess."

Camilla smiled and said nothing for four steps. One hand touched along the stone balustrade, the other carried her flowers—a cloud of blurred white freesia. The light from the high lamps, swinging by iron chains from somewhere in upper shadow, was mellow upon her. Camilla had often observed that every woman can make a triumphal progress once a day if she chooses, which is when she comes down dressed for evening, if only she does not hurry and make herself absurd. There was about Camilla a beautiful leisure, which, to Holman, also suggested a princess.

"You look very like one," Holman repeated.

Camilla shook her head.

"No," she dissented prettily, "no, Mr. Holman. If I were, you would be on your knees, in gold lace, instead of upright on an Oriental rug."

"Ah, but think what a beautiful rug it is," Holman defended, looking down.

No one was in the drawing-room.

Camilla was always early. It was a part of her beautiful leisure, and she was, moreover, the daughter of the host of the house-party. But Holman, one finger in the rare little quarto that he had been reading in the hall, stood looking down at her without manifesting the slightest conception that he was a singularly fortunate man. And Camilla, on the Empire divan, looked up with a sudden inclination to have a charming quarter-hour in spite of Holman. What right had this bookish guest of her father's to have been a fortnight at Chetney House again and again, without in the least understanding that the library was not the only reason why invitations there were sought for? Not that Camilla actually thought this, but she was none the less conscious of its truth.

"Mr. Holman," Camilla said, "I'm going to ask you to take down Miss Berrier tonight."

"Proud, Miss Camilla," said Holman, and actually wondered whether she were angry about the princess speech. If she were, he reflected, he might as well say something else that had been in his mind.

"Do you know, Miss Camilla," he ventured, "that I haven't sat beside you at dinner once?"

"That," said Camilla serenely, "was because you have been near my father's right hand. If you had not known so much more Sanscrit than anyone"—she gave him a charming half-smile—"you should have sat at my side often."

"If I may sit there tonight," said Holman to his own further surprise, "I'll forget that I know any Sanscrit at all," which was not precisely what

he would have preferred to say if he were bent upon a glancing flattery.

"Very well," said Camilla serenely. "And this, you know, is the terrace dinner."

"The terrace dinner?" Holman repeated uncertainly, as if all the guests at Chetney House had not been talking for days about dinner on the terrace that night, with no lights but candles and the moon.

"You have forgotten!" his hostess chided him.

"But as soon as you tell me I shall always remember," he protested.

"Come out to the terrace," she bade him, rising, "and help me to make sure that the tables are right. That will remind you."

Holman's face glowed. People seldom suggested anything to him, save when they wanted to know things Sanscrit. Holman was an authority in so many things that everyone considered him sufficient unto himself. Now he followed her through the long windows into the authority of the moonlight.

The terrace was like a cloister with its walls of vines, trained about hoops through which the moon looked in. The cement floor was laid with rugs, and there the dinner-table was spread, a length of things that sparkled among yellow candle-shades. It had been a happy thought, the terrace dinner, and Holman wondered if it could be true that he was to sit beside Camilla. Camilla was so exquisite in her blue gown and turquoise tiara that he always wondered if she were real at all.

Camilla stood beside the stone parapet and looked through the vines into the garden. Below the garden and the park, the hill upon which Chetney House stood dropped abruptly to a valley where the thick little lights of the village flashed and twinkled. They hardly seemed real, either, Holman thought, viewed from this fairy height.

"Mr. Holman," said Camilla, "I have an idea that this is going to be a very dull dinner tonight. Will you help me to make it charming?"

Holman murmured something. Nobody had ever asked him that before,

save in terms of inviting him to give a toast at some scholarly banquet.

Camilla pursued—and it flattered Holman that, as her father's intimate, he might be his daughter's confidant—"There are Edith Berrier and Mr. Castigan—engaged; and one might as well be absent as absent-minded, unless one is in a very clever play. There is Cecil Dew—who used to be engaged to Edith Berrier—it was too bad to have asked them here together, but father thought they might make it up! There is Miss Roach, who is not friends with Edith, and Harriet Morgan, who never gets on with Miss Roach. And Dickey Bournique, who simply will not worship anybody and is gradually not getting invited, for that very weakness. I love all father's guests this time, but I was in despair when he showed me the list. I think he went up to town and invited every charming person whose telephone he could remember. Except you, Mr. Holman," Camilla added.

Holman laughed, for her youth and her naiveté and her confidence in him made him forgive her everything. But he was looking distinctly bewildered.

"My dear Miss Camilla," he said helplessly, "do you tell me that all these social complexities exist among the people here at Chetney House?"

"Alas," said Camilla, "yes."

"Then," said Holman reflectively, "I am quite the worst of them all. For they have been here three days and I haven't observed anything—anything."

Camilla dropped her eyes to hide their smile.

"I don't suppose," she said, "that any of us seem any more real to you than the people under those lights down there in the village. Isn't it incredible that every light down there is a home—with people? Don't you think," said Camilla petulantly, "that we can overcome the disadvantage of not being Sanscrit roots?"

Holman smiled, looking down at her. One would have said by his eyes that he thought there were those who could.

The others came wandering out presently—Edith Berrier in a dress

that was like May and June, it was so made of gardens; Miss Roach, her red-gold hair and black gown making her seem, according to Dickey Bournique, a sun-goddess, and according to an aside of Harriet Morgan's, like a lamp-post, "painted black, and lit." Harriet Morgan herself was in white, because she was still young enough to feel that white is economical; and Dickey Bournique had a new "hungry epigram" to tell to every new arrival—the same epigram and the same hilarious, boyish laughter. Last, Mr. Castigan, the engaged Mr. Castigan—huge, hoarse, using his hands as he talked, didactic to the point of never saying, "I think," but always, "The truth is." And beaming on them all, the master of Chetney House, conscious of having brought together jarring elements successfully merely because they did not jar visibly. The master of Chetney House was as simple as a child; but the simple people found this a virtue, and the complex liked his salads.

Holman sat beside Camilla. Camilla was, he thought, as charmingly in excess of her guests as the sun is in excess of the moon, as the Sanscrit outdistances the English. Holman was not particular about his metaphors. He did not reflect that a man who is in love never is particular in metaphor, though he grows particularly metaphorical. Besides, Holman had no idea that he was in love. And as for Camilla, she glanced at him over her *consommé frappé*, and reflected that he was quite the best-looking man at the house, and among the best-looking men in town. She would have said that his eyes were made for speech, and instead of that he merely saw out of them. His voice had all the old music and none of the modern lyrics. He talked impersonalities with such a charming air of deference that, if one had not known, one would have said that he was in love with one and had chosen an impersonality to talk about by chance.

"You must tell me, you know," Holman ventured, "how to help you

make this succeed—if you really think I can help."

Camilla glanced down the long table with its pleasant, expectant motion of the first dinner moments.

"They are doing nobly yet," she said. "Things seldom fail before the *entrée*."

"Then," offered Holman uncertainly, "I shall be of no manner of use until the *entrée*?"

"But which are you, then?" Camilla challenged him gaily. "Musician or jester or poet?"

Holman gave the matter thought.

"The jester, I fancy," he said, "whose jests never come off. Or perhaps the musician, out of tune. Or maybe even the poet, without a market. Forgive me running myself down," he added, "and offering you the necessity of telling me it isn't so. Still, if I praised myself, you would have in honesty to say the same thing."

"Talk about me, then," said Camilla, since she had the impulse. Then she left him helpless, because she wondered what he would possibly say. Her idle daring gave him the courage of the challenged.

"Do you know," he told her abruptly, "I could almost say of you what you ought just then to have said of me: 'It isn't so.' You aren't so, you know. How can you be actually here and still be so beautiful?"

Camilla turned with real interest. This was better than she had dreamed Holman would do.

"I am very much here," she answered. "I know, because I am amused. I am actual. It is very easy to be."

"Nobody seems to find it so," meditated Holman. "I don't find it so. Of course, it is infinitely easier not to be really one's self."

"And infinitely cheaper," said Camilla suddenly.

Holman looked down at her almost childish profile, and wondered how in the world she came to know that—to have thought of it at all. He had told her the truth. She did not seem to him quite actual. She was so beauti-

ful, so very young, so absorbed in the butterfly doings of her butterfly guests that it had never occurred to him to think of her, somehow, as actually living out life.

"Cheaper?" he repeated uncertainly.

"Ah, well," said Camilla, "was I hard upon us both? But, for example, I find it far easier to be the eternal hostess, the eternal guest than I would find it to live my own life—live out *me*. If I did that—if I were to let myself be really I, you understand—I should rush about. We have tenants, the village has schools and no library, unpaved streets and no parks, no fountains, and so on. Perhaps I flatter myself, but if I went about those things, I fancy that I would be I—more the actual, you know, than I am now as the eternal hostess, the eternal, forever-and-ever guest."

"To be beautiful ought to be actuality enough, Miss Camilla," said Holman rapidly, because she was rather amazing him. And Holman was not accustomed to being amazed, so that it required his whole attention.

"It would be enough," said Camilla, "if one were a book-cover, or a Sheraton chair, or a particularly good candlestick. As it is, it would not be enough for me. That is the only difference between me and bric-à-brac. Of that, no more is expected. Of me, expect no more."

Holman smiled. She not only had ideas, he reflected, but she was clever. He had not often met the two. The women who said things well usually had so little to say them about.

"Of course, there are one's tastes to reckon with," he objected, to see what she would say. "One has to have one's tastes."

"But one doesn't have to *be* one's tastes," Camilla modified it.

"Fortunately," said Holman, "or many of us would be in the bad odor of being in bad taste."

"And yet," Camilla said, "a great many people are made up of their tastes and nothing else. Like Dickey Bournique, 'Subtract me from a good epigram,' Dickey is always saying,

'and you'll get all there is of me—the laugh.'"

"After all, Dickey is not much of a witness," observed Holman. "He is more of a train of cars."

Camilla looked down the table. Dickey Bournique was saying uproarious nothings. Miss Harriet Morgan was listening and keeping Dickey's attention for herself, to the exclusion of Miss Roach. Cecil Dew was listening to Miss Roach and watching Edith Berrier. And Castigan, the engaged, was certain to be, just then, telling his fiancée that the truth was, he loved her.

"He might have the good taste to doubt," Camilla thought. "The positiveness of lovers is so crude."

So far the dinner was going magnificently, and already the entrée was past. She turned her serene profile toward Holman and devoted herself for ten minutes to the man on the other side, a man just returned from a buried city, who was telling the strangest and most delightful things which nobody really cared about save Camilla's father. Seeing this, Camilla managed a little skirmish of general talk and generated little sallies of laughter, and then retreated to the seclusion of a word to Holman.

"The salad is over," she murmured. "Father's dressing did more than the wit of many tongues. There ought to be a proverb about that. If only the dessert is good, and Dickey will not falter, we are quite saved."

"But I haven't helped," remembered Holman gloomily.

"You are perfect not to be conscious that you have," said Camilla, just absently enough to savor her words with charm. "Some way, I fear the dessert. Dessert is so conclusive."

But when the cloth was cleared the master of Chetney House had a surprise.

"Shall we all go down to the garden?" he asked tranquilly, as if one walked in the garden in the midst of every dinner. "Dessert is waiting us in various places in the garden. May I trouble you to find the lantern that is the color of your place-card? Under-

neath will be dessert and coffee. Let nobody escape."

A soft tumult of laughter and pleasant surprise followed the announcement. Camilla turned to Holman, her eyes sparkling.

"How splendid of him, bless him!" she said. "How he loves a surprise! He didn't even tell me a word!"

Holman, as she rose and laid her hand upon his arm, realized, with a delight which should have amazed and enlightened him, that he was to spend the next half-hour alone with Camilla in the garden, under some heavenly Chinese lantern or other which was the color of his heavenly place-card. They trooped down the broad moonlit steps, and across the curve of gravel to the dim garden, pricked by its goals of rainbow flame. For a woman very beautiful, very young, absorbed in the butterfly doings of her butterfly guests, and not actually living out life, Camilla was causing him prodigious delight in living that evening, and she was even inciting the hope that dessert might last forever.

For Holman dessert did not even begin. As they went down the last steps of the terrace a servant met Camilla and gave her a note. Holman, a few steps withdrawn, was half-conscious of Dickey Bournique's voice in a clamor of discontent.

"Well, now," he was protesting, "our two place-cards are the color of the full moon. Is the full moon our lantern? Have we got to trail clear there? It'll take us a good hour. I want my bread-and-butter-and-ice-cream——"

Dickey's voice melted complainingly, and Holman met Camilla's eyes.

"It's Jeddie, in the village," she said, as if Holman knew. "They don't think the poor little fellow will live till morning. And he wants me——" She looked at Holman uncertainly. "I must go to him," she said swiftly.

"My maid is in the village. There is no one to take me. We should be back by the time that they return to the drawing-room. Mr. Holman, will you drive me down?"

To the best of his ability Holman must have said that he would, for Camilla turned to her father, who walked near them with the stranger from the buried city, and explained to him; and Holman heard her father thanking him. Then Holman stood on the porch of the morning-room with Camilla, her bright, uncovered head rising from the gloom of her long cloak, and last he took the lines from the hands of the groom, who sprang in his place behind them, and the trap rolled down the steep drive to the side gates of Chetney House. Below, the road lay long and white under the moon, dropping to the valley, where the thick lights of the village flashed and twinkled.

They talked a little, but Holman was more conscious of what he was thinking than of anything that could have been said. And yet his thoughts were confusion, save for one emotion that burned clear. This was a sudden boundless exultation. He could hardly have explained it, and he was far from understanding what it signified. It was an exultation in which his drive with Camilla—keen delight though that was—was not to be considered. It had seized upon him suddenly—at the moment when Camilla had lifted her eyes from the letter and he had read her face as she spoke of "Jeddie." But Holman did not formulate even that. He simply gave himself up to the delight of his mood, and let the horse have the rein, and watched the long road unroll beneath the beating hoofs, and the shadows and the watching green go wheeling past. They crossed the river bridge, and a night wind came down the water, and Holman turned to her with a question which, being Holman, it would not have occurred to him to ask before he had had that glimpse of her with the letter in her hand. Before that she was simply a meaning of beauty and youth, who was not really living her life! Now it was suddenly as if she had become human, and he asked her, as he might have asked an ugly woman, whether she were cold.

Camilla shook her head.

"No, but make him go fast," she said,

like a little child, and as Holman touched the horse with the whip and they sprang forward, he was even happier than he had been before. Then they came to the village and Camilla showed the way to the cottage of Jeddie's mother, and at last Holman followed her up the alder-bordered walk and Camilla went to the little sick child.

They bade Holman wait in the bare parlor, and he could hear the wandering voice of the child and at last Camilla, speaking softly. He did not know what she was saying, but little by little the child grew still. He fancied that it might be the silence which would precede the end, and he feared that the end might mean pain to Camilla, and he tried to hear the faintest sound from that upper room. His eyes rested on the poor little ornaments in the mean room, on the worn furniture and the scattered, useless toys of the child. Who "Jeddie" might be he had no notion, but it was enough that in some fashion Camilla had made herself necessary to these people. Camilla here! It seemed incredible—Camilla, absorbed in the butterfly interests of her butterfly guests. Holman sat in the mean room, among the poor little ornaments, and he was happier than he had ever been in his life.

At last Jeddie's mother came to him—an invalid, with a wan face beneath straight gray hair, and she wrapped her apron about her hands and sank down on the chair that Holman placed. As she talked it seemed to Holman that she hardly knew to whom she spoke, but that she must talk to someone, and so she turned to Camilla's friend. He was glad that it happened to be he, and he listened eagerly to what she said.

"Jeddie's asleep," she told him. "He's asleep. An' he hadn't slep' any for hours."

Holman listened while she went on. With the emotion of the moment and the garrulity of her class, she seemed to find unspeakable relief in merely talking on of the details of the little boy's tedious illness, the fever which had sapped his strength, the burden of the

nursing, the goodness of everyone. Far from dwelling upon anything that Camilla had done for the child, Jeddie's mother exhibited a faint, unconscious jealousy of the fondness which he had for her. But in the course of her rambling narrative she said things which made Holman know all the little gifts and the visits and the care that lay behind that fondness.

"That picture there," said the woman, nodding toward a colored print on the dingy wall, "he cut that out. He always says it looks like her."

Holman's eyes rested on the crude reproduction of a photograph of some royal princess, wearing her crown as Camilla was wearing her diadem that night. His heart went out to the little boy who understood.

A half-dozen times the woman tiptoed her way to the room above and returned. After the last time she entered sobbing, and made Holman know that it was with thankfulness. The fever had turned; Jeddie was awake, and he would get well. "Wouldn't you like to come up and look in, sir?" she said to Holman.

He hesitated, at last veiling his desire to go with the thought that he might be able to take Camilla's place for a little. So he followed the woman up the bare stairs to the uncarpeted hall above, and he stood in the doorway looking at Camilla. She still wore her dark cloak and the light lace upon her head, but her hair shone in the lamplight above the little cot. And there must have been a gleam of her blue gown in the folds of the cloak, for the child—a thin little lad of nine or ten—suddenly stretched out his arms and pulled at the slender wrap.

"Let me see," he cried. "Oh, it's like the picture! I want to see."

Camilla looked about her, smiling, and smiled at Holman in the doorway. Jeddie's mother, to whom reproof returned as her natural key now that the danger was past, cried some remonstrance, but tearfully. Upon which Camilla unclasped her cloak, and let the lace fall from her head, and stood by Jeddie's cot. Holman

watched her breathlessly. She was so unbelievably beautiful that it was as if the dingy room became some other place in her presence.

"You've got a crown on," said Jeddie in awe. "I knew you was the princess all the time!"

Holman turned and went down the stairs and waited in the hall below. He heard Camilla's voice singing the stupid little song of some game that Jeddie liked. Presently she came softly from the room and down the bare stairs, her cloak once more drawn about her. And Holman, standing in the squalid hallway below watching her, knew that he would carry that picture in his heart when that other staircase, with its stone balustrade and its high lamps swinging by iron chains from somewhere in upper shadow, would be long forgotten. For that had been a girl making a triumphal descent in beautiful leisure; but this was Camilla.

So when they were once more in the cart, speeding up the highroad, Holman knew the meaning of the fierce joy in his heart. He knew that Camilla among her butterfly guests absorbed in their butterfly interests had held his love and strengthened it, though he had hardly known of its existence; but he knew also that Camilla, as she had stood with the letter in her hand, her face tender with sympathy and an impulse to go to Jeddie, was somehow the Camilla of another world, a nearer world than he had known that she shared, a world in which she was the new princess, crowned above Jeddie's little cot, wearing the child's love and admiration like a diadem invisible. She had always looked like a princess, but it was Jeddie who had shown him that she was one.

Holman was silent, partly because he did not trust himself to speak, partly because he did not find words for all that was thronging in his thoughts. Below her breath Camilla was humming a snatch of the stupid little song of the game that Jeddie liked, and the wheels went round and the hoofs beat

with the rhythm of it, and it seemed to Holman as if it were the rhythm to which the world had always been turning, only he had never known. And now he knew.

When he did speak he said an inconsequent thing.

"After all," he reminded her, looking down the twinkling village street, "all these lights do mean homes—and people. They are real, if only one can come near to them."

"Yes," Camilla assented, "as real as Chetney House. As real as Mr. Castigan, saying what things are facts. Even as real as Dickey and his smile—and Harriet and Miss Roach—and the man from that unreal buried city." She looked up the steep road. "Doesn't the terrace dinner seem unreal?" she said suddenly.

Something caught at Holman's heart. Maybe she would understand, he thought; and in any case he must tell her. She had stood on the height of the terrace and looked down to the unreality of the valley; and now she rode in the moonlight of the valley and looked up to the unreality of Chetney House. But somewhere between the two unrealities there had suddenly been struck for him the one reality. Holman looked down at her, and when Camilla looked up she saw that his eyes had some way found their utterance.

"It seems to me that everything has been just as unreal until I saw you standing by Jeddie's cot," said Holman—but when he saw her eyes upon him he became suddenly the old Holman, shy in her presence, unexpectant of the best, humble and unappealed to and wrapped in rare quartos and Sanscrit roots; and it seemed to him, with anguish, that he caught something of the old mockery in her eyes—the confidence, the beauty, the very wit that set her so far from the Camilla who had stood by Jeddie's side. But he went steadily on: "Camilla, I love you. I know perfectly that you cannot love me, but I'd like to tell you, all the same. I—some way, I want you to know."

Camilla's eyes did not falter, but Holman did not see that they held more than surprise.

"I've nothing to offer you," he went on, "but it doesn't seem fair for me to love you, as I know now that I love you, without telling you, Camilla. As long as I thought you were—as you were up there," he looked up at the white towers of Chetney House, "I could have loved you and not told you—really, I don't know that I knew it myself. One could like a flower, you know, and never dream of telling it. But when the flower speaks to one—as you did tonight when I saw you with Jeddie—then the flower ought to be told. You see, I never knew that you were real, Camilla—any more than the terrace dinner or the lights in the valley seem real—until I saw you in that mean little room with the boy."

Camilla looked past Holman, across the still fields.

"There are other ways of being unreal," she said tranquilly.

Holman looked at her.

"You with your rare quartos and your Sanscrit roots," said Camilla, "why, I think, until this minute, you have never once been your real self in my presence! How could I love you—then?"

"Then?" said Holman below his breath. "*Then—Camilla?*"

Her eyes were on his almost wistfully.

"Oh," she said, "if you are like this always and always—and yet, perhaps, I am not the way I was there at Jeddie's," she broke off. "Perhaps you would see that I am not. But if I were—and if you were the way you are now, always and always—I think we could love each other very much indeed," Camilla said.

It was as surprising as a door of the air opening before him to radiant things; but even then it came to Holman dimly that what had happened to him and to Camilla was what happens to all the world. Sometimes the unrealities are swept aside long enough for one heart to look into another, unmasked and unafraid; and that is a love-story.

After that the long moonlit road, and the overhanging hill, and the high lights at Chetney House had their turn at not being either real or remembered. And as they drove through the park and heard Dickey Bourne's unreal treble summoning everyone to the drawing-room, Holman was swept away by a bewildering conviction.

"Camilla," he said, "we were right, after all, about the terrace dinner, and the lights of the valley, and even you and I not being real. Nothing is real till we make it real—by love, or by finding out someone like Jeddie. You said," he reminded her, "that it was easier to be the eternal hostess and the 'forever-and-ever' guest. Is it?"

"Ah," said Camilla, "we all say that—till we know."

Holman looked across at the terrace table—a length of things that sparkled among yellow candle-shades, and then down to the valley where the thick lights of the village flashed and twinkled.

"Camilla," he said suddenly, "Princess Camilla . . ."

She lifted her face, with a little breath of content. Holman, glancing over his shoulder, was greeted by the reality of the groom's impassive back. He stooped a little, and Camilla's face was still uplifted. It was easy to add a momentary actuality to a shadowy world.



A LARGE JOB

CHOLLY—The dentist had a terrible time filling my tooth.

SARCASMUS—Probably the cavity extended right up into your head.

September, 1906—10

EUDORA, IDEALIST

By Marie Louise Goetchius

"**B**UT write—write!" the girl almost cried.

"Write what, my dear?" answered the man. "Have I not written all my life, since the day when I first found a broken lead-pencil and a bit of paper? The words are on my tongue, are in my fingers, are in my brain, standing tip-toe, calling to me, 'Take me! Take me! Bring me into the world!' But they are the words to nothing—to everything. They are the vague expression of too many dreams, and not one tangible thought. How can I gather drops of water together and make a lake without any rock bottom?"

"Oh, Oliver," urged the girl, "you must—you can—why, you have!" she went on. "I first loved you because I knew you, felt you, in one of your stories. I touched the gold in your heart, through the gold in those words you despise. And others have told you what I am saying. You are Oliver Royal, poet, writer, artist."

"The manuscript of my last romance was returned," the man confessed moodily. "Oh, what's the use!" he suddenly stormed. "I'm last year's fashion this year. I've chased my butterflies, and caught a few, but their colors fade and their wings are broken when I send them from my garden through the city gates. People have no use for frail butterflies—they want bulls; they want red waving handkerchiefs; they want the shouts of blood-thirsty crowds. Because I can't give them bulls they crush my butterflies. I have nothing, nothing!"

There was a silence. The man's presence seemed to fill the softly lighted room with "I's." He lay back in the

big chair—the girl's own chair, which she always yielded to him—and let his tired head sink in its cushioned comfort. His nervous hands picked mercilessly at the old-gold silk that covered its arms. The glow of the lamp's mooned light fell on his face, and he basked in it despondently. Eudora rose timidly, and reached his side. She bent over him—a willow woman with eager, wondering eyes, and touched his cheek.

"You have me, Oliver," she said simply.

The man roused himself with an obvious effort, but his voice, perhaps from habit, had fallen again to the low, silky tones of a poet.

"Yes, darling—Eudora," he said. "I have you, and you are all dear to me. But you stand at the end of my path, as the Reward, and I must sow and reap before I can gather in."

Eudora looked at him helplessly. He seemed so far away. "Oliver," she said at last, "I don't mind being poor."

"Poor, no—but penniless, yes, dear child," the man retorted a little impatiently. "No, no, I must try once more. I will go back, and sit in my window with a patch of blue sky over the church steeple across the way for inspiration. I shall sit there all night, and all tomorrow and the next day if need be, to wait for an Idea that will make me great. They shall acclaim me yet. They shall recognize my power or"—he stopped suddenly, as if he had run heedlessly to the mouth of a pit—"or," he continued, "they shall laugh at my downfall. But they *shall* see. They shall not pass me by, with neither the smile one accords a fool nor the frown one accords a genius."

"And I shall love you, whichever it is," breathed Eudora.

Oliver rose impulsively and stretched his long arms to her.

"If I succeed," he said, "you shall acclaim me with the rest. If I fail, you must let me go, for I cannot face defeat even with the love of a woman who loves me."

Before Eudora could answer he had kissed her on her lips, and had gone. She stood quite still, carved out in the silence of the inanimate things around her. Then, moving almost inaudibly, she drew up her own chair to the half-open window, and lying back in it, closed her eyes. The two actions were typical of the strain of sentiment in her. Not long ago he had sat in that chair; in a little while he would be sitting by his window, dreaming under the same blue sky that she could see.

The crocus breath of Spring, the closing darkness of the waning afternoon, mingled together a sweet perfume that crept around her like an unseen garden. The footfalls of a waking and a sleeping city beat persistently on the patient pavement. The rumbling growl of traffic was subsiding with the end of business hours. In the distance the crank of the street's music-makers was being turned untiringly in wheezy melody. Eudora knew that children would be dancing solemn, pinched little steps to its tunes.

A twilight breeze teasingly blew the soft white curtains toward her. She put them aside without annoyance, and gently allowed herself to glide into the world where all outside noise is fused in a vague murmur, as the waves of constant rolling seas must sound to sand-maidens living in the depths of beaches. She became an audience of one, while the rose-colored curtain of her life drew slowly up for the play—as much of it as she could see on the stage, and what she could not understand, in the green-room.

She sat, a lonely child, behind the footlights. Her mother had sought to give toys, first to her body, then to her soul, but she would have none of

them. She had laughed and sung because it pleased her to please others, but even as a child she had felt that her playmates wished the joyous ring of her happiness, not the pensive note of her dreams. She needed sympathy, she craved love, and she could not bear to hurt a living thing, so she had danced to please them, and thought to satisfy herself. In her girlhood was an uncertain desire to see her dreams take form; in her womanhood was a fixed purpose to give out something tangible to the world, until at last the creative germ, pushing invisibly through a sensitive mind, had blossomed—and there came a day when she woke to find herself in the travail of her Idea.

She told to herself a whimsical story of how in her first Dream a Fairy had come to her and offered her a basket full of dimpling Cupids, with laughing, shallow eyes, and had said, "Will you take all these small Loves in your life, girl?" And she had answered, "No; what else have you?" Then the Fairy had brought to her a child with deep sorrowful eyes, and a firm mouth, with tender growing wings and steady hands. "Will you have this one Love, woman?" she said. "If you let it die, there will be no other." And she had put out her arms to it. Again the Fairy had come, and offered her a basket full of wreaths, woven in roses and lilies, and had said, "Will you take all these small talents in your life, girl?" And she had answered, "No; what else have you?" Then the Fairy without a word had brought to her a single wreath of laurel studded with pearls, and she had chosen that.

She was waiting for the dream to come true, when the Idea was born. Then she felt that her groping hands had touched in part the Prophecy. She handled this fulfilment of it, at first, like some bits of breakable porcelain, almost afraid to touch it. For a little while she even left it alone on the highest shelf of her imagination until one day a sudden instinct of activity caused her to take it down.

In breathing off the dust she quickened it to life. It became a part of her, and in the end she became a part of it. She took it with her, wherever she went, and let it touch all things she met and saw and felt. From each of them it seemed to gather vital sparks. It was the prism through which she saw a new world—a prism of arrested colors. She kept it jealously, for she knew when she had once given it out, once put it into shaped expression, she would be childless. She had borrowed little straying bits from it, and half to humor her waiting ambition, had given them form. But they had gone forth, and been accepted, namelessly. She had seen them smile at her with odd familiarity from the pages of the magazines which had become their step-parents; but no one else ever knew their origin. In the meanwhile she developed into a woman of latent force, always listening, looking, storing what she gained.

It was by listening that she had first heard Oliver Royal's name; it was by looking that she had first found one of his stories—a thread-like fantasy in painted shadows. It appealed to her, because there was so little of it, told so daintily. She had read it more than once, and then had searched for others. His exquisite style, his fastidious choice of words, which transformed the merest film of fancy into a glowing, beautiful tale, blinded her to the lack of depth in his touch. She blew his soap-bubbles to the heights of the ideal, and failed to see them burst.

At last she had met him, and had bowed down to his artistic self, without inquiring into the real man. It is always a mistake to judge a house by the company "parlor," where all the choicest treasures are placed invitingly to dazzle strangers' eyes, and where the blinds are always drawn becomingly. She had penetrated into his "parlor," and she thought she had explored his living-room. He let her think, accepted her worship, and made love to her in return.

Her friends—as all friends do—had

sounded notes of warning. "Keep away from Oliver Royal," they had said. "He will be either worthless, because he will become great, or because he will amount to nothing in the end." He had said: "Dear heart, I love you! Some day, when the world rewards me for what I give it, will you reward me for what I give you?" And she had promised him.

Eudora stirred uneasily in her chair, but did not open her eyes. The figures of the past were coming and going. She had nearly reached the present. His advent into her life had not obscured the importance of the Idea. But that was her secret. She had not told it to him, nor shared it with him, because she instinctively feared his disapproval, or a slight perfunctory criticism which might cripple its strength, and because with all her young pride she was waiting for the time when she would surprise and delight him with her gift. She was like a sensitive, high-strung instrument that is played by a beloved master. The slightest twist or rough impatience would break the strings, and she had the dual perception to realize that. She knew that strings once broken could not be mended. Reluctantly she confessed to herself that he often left her out of tune—but that was her fault for asking so much of him. He was high-strung, too.

Of late there had been signs of more than moody irritation in him. She had fought against it—but her idol was discouraged. He had used his little coffer of gold unsavingly, desperately, and the inevitable had happened to a man without inward resources. There remained nothing but emptiness. As he had said that afternoon, the words were there, the glittering, spangled words, but the figure to dress them in was lacking. Why could he not have an Idea, too?

Eudora's eyes were open wide now. She had touched the land of the Present. He had the Soul, she knew that he had the Soul. It was a tragedy that he should have exhausted his treasure-trove. He was over-tired. It

was because he had to write to live and love that he couldn't write. Genius should not be forced. Her eyes filled with tears. It was the hour when she must stand by him and help him. Why couldn't he have an Idea like hers? Her Idea! How comforting it was for her to own one. Suppose he should sit by his window for days and nights, and nothing would come?

Suddenly cold, she rose from her chair and closed the window. It had grown dark outside. She would be selfish, ignoble, to keep what would start him on his bright career again. She paced the room restlessly. She would see! She would see!

II

It was several days before he came back to her. During that time, with wonderful intuition, she had not communicated with him.

Then one evening he walked in, without a word of greeting to her, and threw himself on her chair. She had been curled up on the sofa, softly contemplating the dying fire, which was only necessary because of a certain reluctance to part with all of Winter's comfort at once. She had been wrestling with her Idea and the new Idea of possible separation from it. If he came to her empty-handed, she had decided it must go to him. She would renounce it as her own. She would suggest it to him, without letting him know that the roots of it grew in her soul. He would not take it, if he could see what it meant to her. She could only outline it to him—it would then belong to him to handle as he saw fit. She trembled unconsciously. It was such a fragile thing—it would need to be watered by tears and sunned by smiles. It was human! Of course, she trusted him, but in a hidden crevice of her consciousness lay a voice which whispered through its smothering folds, "It will be a test of perfect understanding if he takes your own Idea and moulds it as you would do in his place." And deeper than the voice there lay

buried a tiny doubt which stirred fretfully underneath the sod of her loyal mind. The doubt, "If—he—should—not!"

His silent entrance startled her. A quick glance at him, after her first involuntary spring to her feet, was sufficient. She ran forward.

"Oh, Oliver!" was all she said.

He was gazing bitterly into the fire, and did not answer; so she waited—standing beside him, looking down at him. Finally, she ventured gently, "Tell me, dear."

"I am tired," he said, and his voice was strained. "I have hardly eaten; I have hardly slept."

She knelt beside him. "You have tried too hard, Oliver," she began.

He laughed harshly. "If I have," he said, "it is for the last time. I have steeped all my beautiful words in a sea of misery, and they are drowned. It is to say good-bye to you that I have come, not to take you in my arms. Oh, it is unjust," he raved, "unjust that with every nerve straining forward in the race, I should have to drop out. If I had not succeeded at first, I should not be worthless in my failure now. I wrote my very life out in the effort to live, and without the power to sway the bread-givers I must starve."

"Oliver, it isn't hopeless. You mustn't give in like this," she remonstrated.

He took her up savagely. "Give in? I am done for. That's what it is. For leaden hours I have thought and thought and pierced my brain, and dug at my heart, for the smallest fiber of material to work on. But the more I thought the blanker I grew. I felt I was driving myself mad. It was hide-and-peek with will-o'-the-wisps and glow-worms. They were all around me. They danced and flashed and twinkled in my eyes, and when I put out my eager hands they vanished. They peopled a gray country of Despair with futile hopes, until I tried to touch them—then they disappeared! It was a battle for new blood, and I have lost."

Eudora raised herself from beside

him, and began to pace the room. His tenseness had caught her like a tidal wave. Strangely, she did not dare to speak of their love—he had so evidently forgotten it, and yet her woman's mood was one of yearning tenderness.

"You make me nervous," he exclaimed. "You might at least sit still."

She obeyed him, hurt at his self-engrossment. Her moment of sacrifice had come, but the impulse was limp.

"Oliver," she began, "may I try to help?"

"You?" he questioned in masculine surprise. "How could you help?"

"It is this," she said; "one has to be practical sometimes." She was selecting her words carefully. "You are temporarily discouraged because there has been a mutiny in your over-tired mind. You are without inspiration for the moment, and you think it is for always. You would rather die and be great than live and be unknown, and you are right, I suppose. What you need is a spark, just one spark to set you on fire again, to lift you up. Isn't that so?"

"If it were so," he answered, "who is to supply it? Those who have the sparks keep them to light their own bonfires, not to inflame the dead."

"Listen, dear," she continued, goading her impulse to life. "Suppose I could—suppose I could give you—an Idea to work on—a match to strike—a piece of wood to make the fire?"

"If you *have* an Idea, Eudora," he said, "give it to me. I don't suppose it will be much good. But I might be able to use it."

The girl shivered. A fear gripped her purpose, and held her back while she tried to think, to balance, to weigh. He appeared to care so little for her help, for what she was about to give him. Unless she— Perhaps it wouldn't do any good—it would be for nothing. Like the sensitive needle-point of a compass her mind was beginning to veer around the other way. She saw the selfish danger of further hesitation, and hurriedly began to speak. For

many minutes her voice went forward untrippingly. Clearly, concisely, without a garment of its wardrobe, she presented to him her naked Idea, and little by little his arms stretched out to receive it. When she had finished and it lay complete in his grasp, he made no comment. She leaned back on the sofa. She felt void and hollow and strangely tired. Her very Being was tenantless, and full of empty spaces. She had forgotten the man, forgotten his reason for being there. She only realized that what she had given out was going onward somewhere, and would never turn back.

Suddenly, a voice, well-rounded, gratified and smooth, rapped sharply at the stone door of her loneliness. "You are a dear girl, Eudora," it said.

Unwillingly she threw open the door to it. But gradually her consciousness grew clearer and she listened eagerly for his next words. She had, after all, but given the thing that was part of her to a man she loved. She could see by his bearing that it had infused new life into him.

"It is a good idea," began the words she was waiting for. "I think with a few alterations it will be a wonderful one. It will certainly bridge the Land of Discouragement to the Land of Hope, my sweet. You were right. I was fighting against an army, with no weapons, because bad weather had rusted my sword"—he smiled—"but you have given me a small key to a new armory, dear, and this time I shall not fail. How did you think of it?" he ended softly.

"It just came," said Eudora.

He looked at her closely. "Very clever of you, when I needed it, my dear," he repeated.

"Are you—what do you think you will do with it?" she asked faintly.

"I can hardly tell yet," he said. "I must consider it carefully."

She could see him wandering off already hand in hand with it, perhaps on the very happy roads that she had so often trod.

"Shall you make a book out of it?" she persisted.

"I am afraid not, sweetheart," he laughed easily. "I can't afford a book now. It will make a good short story. I shall start on it immediately. Some day," he added consolingly, "I shall write a book that will astound the world." He was thinking how pleasant was her interest in him, and how easy it is for temperamental people to sink by the wayside. What a loss it would have been if he had not decided to reënter the ranks!

He rose abruptly. "I am going to leave you now, sweetheart," he said. "I shall be writing hard for the next few days, but you shall hear from me soon."

He kissed her, and left her as silently as he had come.

III

SHE wandered through the next week of long Spring days in a wilderness of moods. The little doubt in its grave had become a cemetery, but the roses were so firmly planted in its heart that she had to pick them one by one to reach the restless dead. Each mood was a plucked rose. Her lover's attitude toward the Idea was a shock to her. She had not expected him to fall down and worship, or to see its possible power, at once; but she had hoped to share it still as part of her flesh and blood. When that had been denied her she felt bereaved.

Then a swift indignation at his ingratitude and calmly ignorant acceptance of her sacrifice invaded her. She had been near to the irrevocable note which would have parted them forever. But there was the inevitable feminine revulsion of feeling—in the woman who wished to be blind, though light was streaming through the open window. He could not do harm to her Idea. She was right in trusting it to him. It had become their child now. If he had not allowed her as much voice in its bringing up as she had longed for, it was because he rightly considered himself more capable than she had been of dealing with it.

It was for her that he was struggling. She had been hurt by his neglect to sound the love-note more clearly in their last interview, but of course there had been so much else to think about. An existent fact to a man is never so important as an uncertain one. Where a woman will continue touching and hovering over a set jewel a man will say, "There, it is well done!" and pass on to the stone that is not yet cut. She understood that. It was her pride to understand the reason for all things which came to her. But his failure to emphasize such a delicate fact had wounded her, and his few tender words had skimmed the surface of her demands.

She felt herself unreasonably sensitive and superstitious about their next meeting. The apprehension of destiny burned feverishly in her heart. She had given him her two most precious gifts—the only gifts she had to give, and she prayed that they might come back to her unspoiled. Then she begged his forgiveness for having doubted him. To question is not to trust, she told herself in torment.

At the end of the week the strings in her over-taut mind were near to breaking. A message from him would have reassured her, but none came. With the loss of her Idea, her occupation in life seemed gone. There was nothing to plan or develop any longer. She tried to think of another, but her imagination was barren.

At last word came that she might expect him that evening. Every current of excitement in her system was open; every live wire in her body was jangling. She was tingling with electric waves when he entered the room.

As soon as she saw him the turmoil within her subsided to an unruffled calm. The tension of waiting over, she was amazed at her reaction into sudden stillness. He came straight to her, took her hand and raised it to his lips.

"Darling," he said, "I have wonderful news."

Love's torches, ever ready in her

anxious heart, flared up to her eyes, and she turned joyously.

"Oliver," she cried, "you have finished the story, and it is to make you famous."

"The story?" he repeated after her rather blankly. "No, no, dear child. I had forgotten it for the moment. I finished that several days ago. I brought the manuscript for you to read. I thought it might amuse you." He gave her no time to speak, but went on: "Never mind that now. Don't you want to hear my news? My chance has come! Tevis, who has always predicted great things for me, has offered me an editorship on *The Artist*. He says he needs an enterprising man with talent for the place. Old Peters died last week, and a good thing it was, too. He never was worth much. I am stepping right into his shoes. Tevis says that he has been watching me for some time, in view of this. Of course, I shall have plenty of leisure for my own writing besides." He paused for breath and looked at her expectantly.

"Why, Oliver, Oliver," she said lifelessly, "how very nice!"

It struck her as she spoke that enthusiasm should be winged, not weighted, but a revelation was dawning on her; she was not yet sure whether it would be of her own selfishness or of his. A bolt had fallen which was about to explode, and she dared not move until it did. Her attitude was like an insult to his ever-defensive egotism.

"Eudora," he said, "are you stunned with joy? I can't explain your reception of my news in any other way. Don't you see what it means, besides all I have told you? Are you too bewildered by my good fortune to understand what it represents? After I have really started, after the battle is in my hands, the chance grasped, do you not realize that we can come into our world of dreams; that the castles shall change by the wand of gold into a home for us both?"

Eudora roused herself with an effort—the revelation had come.

"Yes, it must be that your good

news has stunned me, dear Oliver," she said, "and you will think that I have gone mad, but I want you to give me the manuscript you have brought with you and I want you to let me read it now—while we are together."

He stared at her. "I cannot pretend to follow you," he said coldly, "but I will certainly grant your request."

He pulled the package of beautifully written sheets from his overcoat pocket and handed it to her, then walked moodily over to the table and began fingering the books which lay there. "You have spoiled everything now, anyway," he said.

She did not answer him. She was turning over the leaves of the thin paper with trembling hands. It was maimed, disfigured—that she saw at a glance. The wistful-eyed child with the lips that smiled like the petals of a budding flower had been changed into a painted, grimacing woman; the atmosphere of mignonette was now the overpowering scent of such a woman; the soft draperies were rustling silks; the delicate selflessness had vanished, and a bold personality stood in its place. It was all well done. If it had not been hers, she might even have admired. The created lay before her—the creator behind her. All that she had dimly suspected and feared was revealed. The Pretense of a Soul, when face to face with the Real, had not recognized it. He had built a body out of her spirit—a beautiful body, but with his own eyes and mouth and hands. That he had not asked her opinion of it before hurt her but little. It was such a small part of the supreme test. He had burned his bridge behind him that she had given him the wood for and that he had built alone. The life that stretched its empty arms to her now was a sexless one. She must walk through it alone. The revelation had robbed her of her riches.

"Eudora, Eudora," he was saying irritably, "I haven't been able to solve this riddle yet. Will you tell

me what the story you are reading has of such particular interest as to make you forget me?"

"I can't tell you, Oliver," she answered, standing up, "because you wouldn't understand."

He went over to her and patted her affectionately on the shoulder.

"There, my dear," he said, "I frightened you. I should have told you more considerately. Kiss me, and I shall try to forgive this *mauvais quart d'heure*."

She stopped his lips as they drew near to hers.

"I expect you to hate me when I have finished," she began. "If you had not told me that you were to be great," she continued sarcastically, "I should not have felt at liberty to speak. I shall not attempt to explain why I am going to give you this crumpled rose-leaf in your garden of laurels. If I am being cruel it is to anger—not to wound you. I can't marry you, and I don't love you any more. I am not dealing a death-blow to you. I doubt if you love me so very much. There are other women in your world, and they will comfort you for the failure of one. Please go away now." She was unnecessarily brutal, she told herself, but it had to be done quickly.

As she had predicted, his anger blazed up with his hurt vanity.

"Your mystery shall remain your own," he answered. "You may regret this dismissal of the man who loved you." Poetic renunciation was in his voice. "If I understood I might argue, but I can't defend myself in the dark. You have made me lose some faith, but women are not all like you. I loved you for your simplicity—that seems gone, so I had better follow it. Good-bye, and may the happiness you have refused me fall on some worthier man."

His voice, full of outraged pride, stopped abruptly and he bowed and left her.

With a gray smile she took up the manuscript he had forgotten and threw it into the embers of the fire. Hungrily the dying sparks caught at the paper and merrily they blazed again. She leaned her elbow on the mantel-piece and watched the red flames crumbling his work to ashes. When they had burned themselves out at last she raised her head. A looking-glass was hanging over the mantel-piece. Her eyes were caught by the mirrored self staring back at her. She peered long and intently at it, as if she were examining a stranger. Then she smiled bravely and turned away.

FAR AWAY

By Elsa Barker

IF you should come and stand in yonder door
 And look at me, I would not feel surprise;
 For I have grown familiar with your eyes
 In dreaming of you. All day long I pore
 Over that volume of unwritten lore—
 The words you might have said, the smiles, the sighs
 That wild imagination prophesies
 When we come face to face as heretofore.

Yet if a letter came for me today
 In your strange writing, I should tremble so
 The very carrier, I think, would know
 Something my soul is yet afraid to say
 Even in the dark when, tossing to and fro,
 I seek the path of sleep, and lose my way.

THE MAN IN THE CASE

By W. Carey Wonderly

THIS coming into a strange city alone had always been to Dorothy Calvert the foremost and greatest objection to her new life. When, on a certain Sunday night, she discovered that she had left the train at the wrong depot, the uptown station instead of the second stop farther downtown, a small fold gathered between her eyebrows.

"Never, never shall I get used to this," she said bitterly. "I do wish I had waited until the morning train," she reflected. "And I really had intended to, only Betty—"

Miss Calvert did not finish her sentence, but set her suit-case down on the wet sidewalk and looked wonderingly, helplessly, around her. Just when she was about to go back to the depot for further instructions, she saw, directly before her, the bright end of a cigarette, and behind that cigarette, she reasoned, there certainly must be a man.

"Can you direct me to the Knighton Hotel?" she began in her soft Southern accent. "I am a stranger in the city—Oh, Mr. Blair!"

"Miss Calvert!" The man seized her suit-case with both hands in his undisguised pleasure. "Why didn't you tell me you were playing Baltimore this week?" he asked reproachfully.

"Why, I don't know!" She laughed in sheer gladness of heart. "I suppose because I never think of those things ahead—look for trouble, you know. I am so afraid of a new city, aren't you? Oh, where is the Knighton Hotel, please? Isn't this a quiet place?"

Blair felt the blood leap forward in his veins as she turned her laughing eyes

to his face. He hailed a hansom, and at her bidding rode beside her down the long, lamplighted street.

"I am so glad you are playing my city this week," the girl told Blair when she bade him good night in the lobby of the Knighton Hotel. "It is so lonely, this life, isn't it? And I have so few friends."

"Do you know, that is the very reason I like it," Blair said. "I don't mean to be unsociable toward my fellow-workers, but I have never cared for the people one meets in this business."

"Some of them are very—terrible." Dorothy shuddered, recalling a certain sister-team with which she had once dressed. She held out her hand. "Good night, and thank you," she said, with a little nod of her head.

When she went to the office to register, the clerk handed her her mail, a letter and a long, sealed package. A soft pink crept into her cheeks as she read the addresses, both in such familiar writing. She hurried up to her room, and without taking off her outdoor wraps or removing the stains of travel from her person, she eagerly cut the cords of the package and cast aside the stout paper covering.

Before she had taken off the layer of cotton which covered them like a mantle Dorothy smelled the magnolias. Fragrant and white, they lay among the cotton, breathing and spelling Alabama and home. Among the buds was hidden a card on which had been scrawled a few hastily written words:

Nothing new. Mother sends love. All well.

BETTY.

The girl stared at the message and tears sprang to her eyes. "Nothing new. Mother sends love. All well. Betty." That was all, everything.

She put the flowers carefully aside and sat down to read the letter. She laughed a little as she opened it. She almost knew beforehand what Tom had to say. It began abruptly.

Betty tells me you have at last decided to give up your Career, and that you will be home about the first of May. This means that you have done with the stage, thank God! Let me know the day and the train and I will come to Cheridah to meet you.

TOM.

Dorothy flung the note without comment upon the floor, and began industriously to remove her hat and veil. She felt that they were all against her, every one of them, Tom included.

Early in the morning, early, that is, for a Thespian who is both young and pretty, Dorothy dressed and went over to the Oriole Theatre for the Monday morning rehearsal. Today, somehow or other, she found the work very warm and tiresome. The leader of the orchestra could not pitch her songs to suit her voice, and altogether everything went wrong. Just when she was leaving the theatre she met Blair, but they were both in a hurry and they stopped only long enough to say good morning.

"He is very late," the girl thought as he disappeared among a lot of scenery. "That leader is as cross as a bear, and very likely he'll find no one to go over his music with him. Who was it—Shakespeare?—that said, 'the play's the thing'? All I've got to say to Mr. Shakespeare is that he did not play two a day in vaudeville!"

Suddenly, as the elevator shot upward with her, it occurred to her that she had never seen Blair's act. She had met him first the week before in Philadelphia, where they had played the same house, but owing to their positions on the bill she had never watched his "turn."

So she sent a boy for a program. First came the monkeys, ugly little beasts who jumped through hoops and skipped a rope. Dorothy liked them better than she did the woman to whom

they belonged. Second was her own act, her two songs; and third—yes, just as it had been the week previous, "Johnnie Blair, monologist." And following Blair, again as it had been in Philadelphia, was Carolus, the female impersonator.

"He does not look like a Johnnie nor a monologist," pondered Dorothy, referring to Blair. "I wonder what he does? I must try to arrange it so I can see his performance. And that Carolus again! I do hope he is not going to follow me all over the country like a bad penny."

Monday is a busy time to those who play two performances a day in vaudeville. The matinee, which is little more than a second rehearsal, passed without any obstacle, and Dorothy found herself in her dressing-room preparing for the night's performance almost before she realized that the day was so much older. She was a little nervous and frightened at the vastness of the yawning auditorium and the sea of upturned faces. In all that crowd there was not one soul whom she knew, who knew her. Yes, there was one—"Johnnie Blair, monologist."

The girl found him waiting in the wings when she came off the stage.

"My songs went badly tonight, didn't they?" she asked.

"They are very bad songs," Blair answered. "Where in the world did you get them? A girl with your voice and personality should—should do very well indeed in vaudeville."

"That means that my songs fell flat," she returned. "Well, I believe they did. Only, the publishers told me everybody was singing them now."

"Yes, they'd serve admirably a woman who is blond and fat and forty," he told her. "Now, why don't you dress your act differently, Miss Calvert? I was thinking."

"Isn't that man looking for you? You're keeping the stage waiting." But Blair showed no tendency to leave her, in spite of the very evident trouble on the stage.

"Indeed, you had better go," cried the girl. "Thank you, good night."

"About your act," said Blair. "Can I see you at the hotel in an hour?"

"Yes." Dorothy gathered up her skirts and hurried away to her dressing-room on the second tier.

These dressing-rooms at the Oriole Theatre are built in tiers on either side of the stage, a little balcony running along in front of each tier and an iron staircase leading down to the stage. From the balcony one could see the stage when it was opened, but for Blair's turn a drop was used, and this completely cut off Dorothy's view.

As she stopped to unlock her door, the woman with the monkey circus came out of the next dressing-room.

"Did you ever see Mr. Blair's act, Mademoiselle Cortrelli?" Dorothy asked the woman on the spur of the moment.

"Blair, Blair? Never heard of him. Is he on the bill?" Her question was not strange, as in vaudeville one makes few friends and has about all one can do to look after one's belongings.

"Mr. Blair is a monologist," replied the girl.

"A monologist?—no!" Mademoiselle Cortrelli shook her head. "But say, what do you think of them making me open the show? I was never before so ill-treated in all my life! Why, I topped the bill in Utica!"

"There must be some mistake," said Dorothy, with the wisdom of six months' training. "If I were you I'd go and see the manager. Carolus has the star position here, hasn't he?"

"Yes, the disgusting creature! A man that wears a blond wig and Paris gowns. He makes me laugh."

"I don't like him myself," confessed Miss Calvert. "You see, it doesn't seem—nice for a man to do that sort of thing, do you think so? Of course, I don't know the man, do you?"

"Me?—no! I'm not used to playing with that kind of people," she said, with perfect truth. "He's very uppish, they say, and makes few friends. He was a college man, I've heard."

"And now a female impersonator!" Dorothy opened her door. "Good night."

When Blair met the girl in the

parlor of the hotel an hour later he suggested that they have their late supper together, and Dorothy, not without some battling with her conscience, consented. He was not like an ordinary acquaintance, she reasoned with herself. They had played together for quite two weeks now, and in vaudeville two weeks is a long, long time. And then, she was lonely.

"About your act," Blair commenced, taking up the conversation at the place it had been dropped an hour before. "There is no earthly reason why you shouldn't be a great success on the stage, Miss Calvert. You are new in the business, aren't you?"

"Well, I played with a Summer stock company in Brooklyn last year," Dorothy told him. "This is my first season in vaudeville."

"It is a queer profession for a girl like you," he said thoughtfully. "You don't look like—an actress."

"I suppose that is what made it so hard for me to get anything to do," she said. "I came to New York feeling so sure of everything, and I wound up in a Brooklyn stock company. They—they were very awful people. I was so glad when it ended—the season, I mean."

"It's a wonder they didn't engage you again," Blair said, watching the girl's fresh young face. "And vaudeville—how did you come to drift into vaudeville?"

"I was determined that there should be no more cheap stock companies. In vaudeville, I was told, one could keep quite to oneself, and so I went to an agent, sang for him, and he booked me. I'm afraid I haven't been much of a success, though."

"That is not your fault," said the man. "You didn't know how. To be a success, one must be a little different; you must step outside of the beaten path. If I were you, I'd get a hoop-skirt and do my hair in Barbara Fritchie curls, a belle of '65, you know. Then you want two good songs—songs of 'befo' de wah,' but written yesterday by men who know how. They wouldn't keep you second on the bill very long."

The girl's eyes fairly danced. "Oh, I'd love to try it, Mr. Blair!" she cried. "I believe I could do it, don't you?"

"Why, of course you could," he said, smiling at her eagerness. "Are you playing in Washington next week?"

"Yes; and you?"

"Yes."

"And I could try it out there!" she cried. "Let me see, would you have a pink-flowered gown or—?" She stopped short and shook her head. "It's no use," she said. "My season closes in Washington. Mr. Adams, my manager, tells me that he can book me on further. The theatres in the South close so much earlier, he says."

"There's the West and New York. When you play New York, Miss Calvert, you might invite Mr. Agent to come and look over your new act that he could not book. Dolly Calvert will have no trouble getting bookings. I'd call myself Dolly, if I were you."

"I've written to my sister that I was coming home after the Washington week," said Dorothy. "And I don't want to go home—that is, just yet. I want to make a big success first, to let them know that I can do something."

"There is no reason why you should not be a success," he assured her. "Now, you get the gowns and the curls and I'll find your songs, some that will suit your voice. To Dolly Calvert, the Dixie Belle!" he cried.

"To Dolly Calvert, the phenomenal success!" laughed the girl.

In all her career on the stage, Dorothy thought, never had a week passed so pleasantly and quickly. She saw Blair every day. He was always coming to her with suggestions and advice, and under his careful guidance the new act was rapidly nearing completion. Dorothy herself was fired with ambition, and nothing seemed useless nor tiresome if connected in any way with the "Belle of '65."

Early Sunday morning they went over to Washington together, where they spent the entire day in the open air. At five o'clock Dorothy made tea on the veranda of the Chevy Chase Club.

"Cream or lemon?" she questioned. "Cream and sugar—lots, please," replied Blair, almost boyishly. "Jove, it is good to get away from the theatre, if only for a little while, isn't it? I say, this is a jolly country round here, Miss Calvert. Do you see that old stone house through those firs?"

"Beautiful, yes. It makes me think of my home. Betty is getting tea now, at home. It's funny how these things come to you," she mused.

Blair understood. "I think you said you were from Alabama?"

"So I am. My name is Davis; the stock-company people named me Calvert. It is more—pretty, the manager assured me. And I was right glad, too, for all my people were against my going on the stage. Do you know, they never even write to me, excepting Betty, who sometimes sends a line on the quiet. Dad—my father will not let them."

"I did not know that," said the man.

"It is the truth. Oh, I suppose you, too, think that I am in the wrong, that I should not have come, but, surely a girl owes something to herself. I am the oldest of seven—all girls—and we are as poor as the proverbial church-mouse. Cheridah—that's the name of our plantation, or what's left of it—has belonged to our family for generations. Oh, it is beautiful! You have no idea; and it is simply going to rack and ruin for lack of a little care and money. When dad sold Long Acre I just couldn't stand it. I came away."

Blair looked at her across the tea-table. "How did you come to choose the stage?" he asked.

"Oh-h!" She shook her head. "People had always said that I had a voice and—and I was told that they paid good salaries on the stage. I got twenty dollars with the stock company, and the manager was always scolding me because my wardrobe was not what he called elaborate. I get fifty now. It seemed almost a fortune, at first, fifty dollars! But it all goes, I hardly know where."

"It is a hard life for a woman," Blair told her. "It is one continual struggle

all the time, and even then you may never reach the top of the ladder."

"Listen!" The girl reached across the table and touched his arm. "Last month I sent mother the little money I had been able to save—oh, so much less than I had hoped it would be—and he—father—made her send it all back to me—every penny. It hurt—so!"

"But surely you did not expect them to keep it?" Blair said.

"If you only knew how mother needs it! Such a lot of girls! I tell you——"

"But you, Dorothy, are not the one to earn that money," he interposed. "Oh, little girl, if you only understood—some things—life—as well as I do——"

"Of course," she said quickly, "I have gone on the stage because I like the life, but I also thought about mother and the girls, and I did so want to help a little. And when that money came back, without a word—! Even Tom has stopped writing."

"Who is Tom?"

"Tom Kenyon. His place is next to ours and I have known him always, all my life. We quarreled when I came away. He said— You see, we have known each other so long and Tom interferes as if he were my brother. He swore that he'd never speak to me again if I went on the stage. In a little while he was writing me six letters a week. But now—not a word!"

Blair got up and walked over to the edge of the veranda. As far as he could see stretched the dull blue of the Maryland hills, quiet, very quiet and mysterious. The man passed his hand wearily over his forehead.

"Mr. Blair!"

He turned and found her beside him.

"Is it just, is it kind, this course they are taking? Never a word, never a line, and because I am trying to do what I believe to be right. They are all determined that I shall come home. Why, Betty sends me magnolias, great boxes of them, because she knows how I love them and thinks that they will remind me of the Long Acre."

"Come!" Blair went after her wraps. "It is very late," he said gently.

Dorothy's new act proved to be, as they had hoped, a decided advancement in the right direction. On Wednesday, after the matinee, she met Blair on Pennsylvania avenue.

"I have something to tell you—two somethings, in fact," the girl said suddenly. On her face shone a faint pink of excitement that made her doubly charming.

"What is it?" Blair asked.

"Well, first I have been advanced to the fourth position on the bill. What do you think of that?"

"You deserve it," he told her. "Yours is the best offering on the bill."

"Except Carolus," pouted Dorothy.

"Oh, Carolus!" The man laughed. "He's nothing; we won't consider him. Of course, he's an excellent card. But your little act—that's different. Let's not talk about Carolus, please."

"Indeed, you can't dislike him more than I do," Dorothy said warmly. "I know it is his business, just as it is mine to wear hoop-skirts, but—it seems—not quite nice for a man to don skirts and parade as a woman. If I were a man I think I should rather beg, steal, do anything, in fact, rather than that."

"Aren't you just a little hard on the chap?" said Blair lightly.

"No." She shook her head emphatically.

"You know, circumstances alter cases," went on the man in the same tone. "We do not know the many little ins and outs of Carolus's life; don't let us condemn him unheard. You yourself sang so-called coon-songs to save your ancestral home from the hammer."

"I fail to see the connection," Dorothy said, with something like hauteur.

Blair put out his hand. "You are not angry?" he said.

"Angry? Of course not!" She laughed as she met his serious face. "Listen, I have so much to tell you. Cassidy came to me this morning, and he wants me to sing on the Avalon roof this Summer."

"Well, are you going to?"

"Am I! Why, I nearly fainted with joy at the mere idea! I spoke to him

about the salary and he said that we need not quarrel over that. Perhaps I shall get a hundred! Oh, if you only knew how I feel! I am succeeding at last."

"But I thought you were going home?" Blair said without looking at her. "Don't Betty, Tom—your people, expect you?"

"I shall write to Betty tonight. You see, they can hardly expect me to give up an offer like Cassidy's. A New York opening! A footing on Success's ladder! And after all, they do not care what I do now. Do you think if they cared they would keep so silent? Betty used to send me magnolias, on the quiet, for father would not let her write to her own sister; but now even the flowers have stopped coming."

"All the more reason why you should go home," he told her.

"If I go home now it will be goodbye to the stage forever. And I have been so happy, so very happy, these last two weeks."

"You will be happier with Tom," Blair answered.

"With Tom! I don't know." She shook her head slowly. "When I was alone and sick for just one word of kindness, he, none of them, sent me a line. Last week, when I wrote to Betty that I was coming home, he answered that he would be waiting for me. Waiting for me, as if I were coming home to him! He takes too much for granted. And I tell you, first, first, we owe something to ourselves! This is my world, and now, when the gates are just opening to admit me, no one dares drive me back. In New York—"

"You will be very lonely there," Blair said quietly. "You will know not a soul and there will be no traveling to occupy your mind. Don't go!"

"You will be there."

"The truth is that I have decided to go to Europe this Summer," the man said. "I have canceled my New York time and will spend some months getting into shape a new line of work."

She answered him very calmly,

though her cheeks were scarlet. "I shall accept Cassidy's offer," she said.

"As you please. Of course, you know best. I'll tell you what I want you to do. You say they have moved your act on the bills to fourth place. That will naturally throw me second. Will you sit out front tonight and see my turn? You know you have never seen it, and you once said—"

"Why, I should love to!" the girl cried. "Let me see—I am fourth. Carolus comes in between us, doesn't he? I'll have lots of time to dress."

A little later they walked back to the girl's hotel. Blair left her at the entrance and going into a nearby druggist's asked to look at the city directory. From the book he copied the addresses of some of the largest flower-shops.

That night, just as the orchestra began to play the curtain music, Dorothy entered a stage-box and seated herself well in the shadow. As the music grew louder, the girl noticed that the great audience was unusually quiet, and directly, off the stage, someone began to sing "Fanchonette." It was a song that Carolus always sang.

As she looked, the calcium was thrown upon the stage and the singer made his appearance. It was Carolus. He came down to the footlights, tall, slim, blond, superbly gowned. His hat, his gloves, his parasol, all of black, contrasted strangely with his white lace gown. And as he sang "Fanchonette" with all the airs and shrugs of an erstwhile Yvette Guilbert, the gallery jeered and the boxes smiled consciously.

Dorothy sat very still and tried not to look at the man on the stage. The leering smile, the too suggestive hands, nauseated her. But the audience, which had paid to see his shrugs and hear his songs, was loath to part with him, and his act was spun out considerably; it was so long, in fact, that the girl was undecided whether to wait for the next turn which must certainly be Blair's.

"No, I'll wait," she said at last, looking at her watch. "He asked me to

see his act, and—if I hurry I suppose I can be ready in time."

"Miss Calvert!" cried one of the stage hands, putting his head in between the draperies. "Miss Calvert, Mr. Blair wants to see you on the stage, please."

She followed the man with beating heart, through the forest of scenery to where, on a high stool, sat Blair.

He had taken off his lingerie hat and the wig of yellow curls and around his shoulders was thrown a heavy, fur-lined cape.

The girl did not see him until she was directly upon him. For a while, an eternity to both of them, they stood perfectly silent looking into each other's faces. The man spoke first.

"You had better hurry. Your act is due in twenty minutes," he said.

"Tell me," she whispered, trying to speak quietly, "you—you are not Carolus—oh, you can't be!"

"My name is Blair," he told her, "Francis Blair. Yes, I am that—thing they call Carolus. Don't tell me you did not know it!"

"Blair. Who, then, is Johnnie Blair, monologist?" she demanded.

"Is it possible you thought—! My dear Miss Calvert, Johnnie Blair is that fat little Irishman who wears a red hat and murders the English language for fifteen minutes after the intermission. Surely you never thought me guilty of such a sin!"

"Why didn't you tell me you were Carolus?" she questioned him.

"I will be quite frank with you. At first I thought you knew; I make no secret of it. Afterward, when you told me how you despised him, I was afraid to tell you. I have so few friends, and I could not, simply could not lose you."

The girl buried her face in her hands. "Oh, if you had only not told me!" she cried. "If you had only kept me in ignorance! It would have been so easy—I never once dreamed—! Why did you tell me, why?"

"Because I want you to be very happy, Dolly," he said. "Because I want you to go home to Betty and

Tom. It was the only way. Believe me, you will never know what this has cost me, but you must be happy, happy, and true happiness is with your own people, not here in the limelight. Go home, Dolly." He touched her lightly on the arm, but she drew back and away from him.

"The Southern Express leaves Washington in half an hour," Blair continued quietly. "Put on your hat and hurry—you can make it. Never mind seeing Swan—I'll fix it with the management."

A slight tremor passed over her body and her lips parted as if about to form some words; then in silence, without one look, she turned and left him.

It was more than the man could bear. "Dolly," he whispered, "Dolly, before you go away forever tell me that you forgive me. You can't understand—"

"No, I can't understand," she said, without raising her eyes. "I can't understand, but I wish—oh, I wish I could!"

In her dressing-room, on the table among her many little boxes of cosmetics, was a long white package. She uttered a little cry when she saw it, and running over to the table, cut with eager fingers the cords which bound the box of magnolias that Blair had tramped half over Washington to find.

"They have not forgotten!" She lifted the buds from their cotton bed and kissed and caressed them. "Oh, Betty! oh, Tom!" she cried, "and I thought you would never, never forgive me! You have forgiven me—this is a token. I am coming now. I'm tired, so very tired of it all!"

With the flowers pressed close to her breast, she threw open the door of her dressing-room and started, breathless and sobbing, toward the stage entrance.

As from another world there came to her a sound of deafening applause; then the opening notes, played by the orchestra, of "Fanchonette." Carolus was about to sing his famous song for the second time that night. He had kindly offered to go on in Miss Dolly Calvert's place, since she had been called home unexpectedly.